

Chase the Wind

by Knut Case

Category: Brave, 2012, How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Friendship, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Hiccup, Merida

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2013-02-01 10:00:19

Updated: 2015-06-11 14:36:56

Packaged: 2016-04-26 13:28:17

Rating: T

Chapters: 16

Words: 42,525

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: All Merida wants to do is fly - and Hiccup has a dragon.

When the Vikings are forced to up and move to Scotland, Stoick agrees to present his oldest son as a suitor for the princess at the games. Meanwhile, Merida is visiting each of the Clans, to see if any of the lords sons can stir her heart. But when she meets a charming young Viking boy, she starts to rethink her options.

1. Ready the Ships

****Chase the** **Wind****

****_Chapter One; Ready the Ships_****

~Hiccup~

Berk was wasting away. Hiccup could see it clearly. Years of stormy weather and ferocious seas, as well as a new group of Thunderdrums settling into the caves near the beach had made the island unstable. The dragons had widened the caves to accumulate their massive bodies and then their nests, and a neat collection of tunnels had been dug out. It meant that the stability of the island was compromised, and it could collapse at any moment. They had already lost one of the older houses when the floor had fallen through, crushing a Thunderdrum nest.

'What're we gonna do?' Hiccup asked himself, instructing Toothless to fly back to the village. Stoick had asked him to check out the island and find out what was going on. Now eighteen, Hiccup was still as scrawny as a fish bone. His voice had deepened, but not by much, and after a very awkward time of squeaking like a Terrible Terror. He also had a house of his own, littered with drawings of Toothless and the other dragons. He had had a hand in the making of a new Book of Dragons, and was the go-to guy when it came to the massive beasts.

Stoick was waiting for him in the Great Hall with Gobber.
>'What did you find?' he asked in his thick accent. Hiccup put a hand on Toothless's head and sighed.
'Doesn't look good, Dad,' he replied, running his hand through his hair. 'The island could collapse at any minute. The Thunderdrums have worked their way into the centre of the island, and the foundations are â€¦ pretty much non-existent.'

Stoick and Gobber exchanged a nervous glance.
>'How long do you think she'll hold?' Stoick asked, tugging on his beard â€" a gesture that Hiccup recognised as nerves.
'A month, maybe? If there's a serious storm, and this is Berk so that could be any day now, it could take the island down in a matter of hours.'

Stoick nodded, but there was worry etched on his face.
>'Thankyou Hiccup. You can go, I'll discuss this with Gobber and Spitelout, and we'll decide what to do,' the chief said, and Hiccup turned and left the hall. He opened the door to his house and a delicious smell hit his nose. Toothless leaped up on to one of the rafters, and Stormfly, Astrid's dragon was directly underneath him, dozing quietly. Astrid herself was setting the table.<p>

'Oh, you're back,' she said with a smile, and Hiccup smiled back. Living with Astrid was... trying. She was beautiful, but he didn't feel the same pull to her as he always had. But he kept it up until he could decide exactly what he wanted.
>'Hi. Is that for me?' he asked, sitting at their worn wooden table. She nodded, and he took a bite of the food. He had to hand it to her, the woman could cook.<p>

'That's delicious, thank you.'
>She beamed at him, and sat down opposite, and he could tell there was something she wanted to ask him.
'So, what did you find when you examined the island?'
>Ah, so that's what she wanted to know.<p>

'Nothing good, I'm afraid. It's been completely eroded by storms and then those Thunderdrums have made it worse,' he muttered.

>'So...what do we do about it?' Astrid asked, putting down her fork. Hiccup rubbed the back of his neck.
'I don't think there's anything we can do. If I were chief...we'd be leaving Berk'

* * *

><p>'People of Berk.'

Stoick's voice boomed as he spoke, as it always did. He had the attention of everyone in the village, from the elders to the youngest members of the Clan.
>'We have lived on this island for many generations, and it is our home. I was born here, and I had always assumed that this is where I would die.'
<p>

_He really knows how to work the crowd, _Hiccup thought with a smirk.

>'However, it seems as though Berk is no longer safe,' Stoick announced with a pained expression. The villagers broke out in hushed mutters.
'What do you mean, no longer safe?' asked someone, and others began shouting as well.

'Berk is no longer able to support us. We must leave, before the island collapses into the sea. Pack your belongings, only the things you really need and load up the boats. We need to leave by the end of the week,' Stoick watched as his people stared up at him in horror.

>'Leave Berk?' asked one woman â€" heavily pregnant. Hiccup could understand her insecurity with the idea.<p>

'Aye. We'll head for the mainland, set up there. It won't be easy, that I know. But we're Vikings! We can handle a move like this.'

>'What do you want us to do?' Gobber asked, and Stoick visibly relaxed.
'Gobber, you make sure everyone is armed to the teeth. We need to be able to protect ourselves. Spitelout, take some of the men and get the boats ready. Food for everyone â€" and a boat specifically for the livestock. We need to take them with us,'

Spitelout nodded and picked a handful of men to ready the boats. Gobber had vanished as well.

>'Hiccup? Who can you trust to take care of the dragons? We'll need to harness them so they'll pull the boats. We can't stay on the water for too long,'
'Possibly... I don't know though,' Hiccup replied. 'I mean, the larger boats will hold a few dragons, so we can do it in shifts. Astrid and Fishlegs can do that. They know more about dragons than anyone else.' _Besides me, of course._

'Right. Everyone else ready the ships. We sail at the end of the week!' Stoick roared, punching the air. The villagers gave a little half-hearted cheer and then disbanded.

>'What about me?' Hiccup asked, desperate to help in some way. Stoick beckoned him away from the rest of the villagers who hadn't yet dispersed.<p>

'I've been to the mainland once, it was a four day boat trip. On Toothless, you can make that journey in a day if you fly non-stop.' Hiccup frowned. Where was his father going with this?'

>'I need you to fly to the mainland. I need to know if it's safe, if there's a place to set up a camp until I can speak with the authority of the land,'<p>

'Authority of the land?' Hiccup repeated, and Stoick's face set into a grim expression.

>'I can't barge on to the land of another chief, or perhaps King...without asking their permission. If a stranger came to Berk, I would expect them to submit to my rule, and I will give that same respect to the King of the mainland,'<p>

* * *

><p>'Be careful,' Astrid warned, and Hiccup rolled his eyes for the third time. Toothless wriggled beside him, eager to get going.
'Astrid, I'll be fine. No one is going to attack a fishbone like me, and if they do...Toothless will eat them, right buddy?'

The dragon growled affirmatively, and Hiccup gave Astrid a look that said 'so there'. She kissed his cheek lightly, and he looked up at Stoick. The chief had also come to see him off, and Hiccup could tell he was nervous.

>'Dad, we'll be fine,' Hiccup assured him. 'Toothless and I have been

flying together for a long time, okay? A day is nothing,'<p>

'It's not the flying I'm worried about,' Stoick said. 'We, uh... we attacked the mainland once when I was a wee lad. Younger than you are now. I didn't go, of course, but we lost a lot of good vikings. They told tales of how the Clans united and fought with the strength of ten armies. We never attempted to take the mainland again, but I don't think they'll like to see us back again, especially with the dragons on our side...'

The sight of the endless sea made Hiccup feel strange. On one hand, it was beautiful, like the world would just go on forever, but on the other hand, it seemed as though Toothless could never fly that far. Not without tiring and crashing into the ocean - a fall that would surely kill them both. He chided himself for being pessimistic and patted the dragon's neck, making Toothless purr. They were simply gliding, keeping an eye out of any sign of the mainland.

'Hungry?' Hiccup asked, leaning forward on the dragons neck, and Toothless licked his chops. Hiccup pointed out a tall rock that jutted out of the water, and Toothless landed on it with ease, folding his wings and lowering his body so that Hiccup could slide off. In the last few years, Toothless had grown to his full size, almost twice as big as he had been. Hiccup took a moment to get his balance - the replacement leg couldn't really match a real one for balance on an unstable surface - then sat himself down and watched as Toothless started to catch fish for himself, and for later. He wrapped the smaller ones up in some thick fabric and tucked them into one of the bags he had made to attach to Toothless' saddle. He'd cook them up once they reached the mainland.

'C'mon bud, we've got a long trip ahead of us' Hiccup said, climbing onto the Nightfury's back, and they took off once more.

* * *

><p>'Don't be dramatic' Hiccup playfully scolded the dragon, who sprawled his body out on the soft grass in a display of exhaustion. He unpacked the bags, set himself up a makeshift mattress stuffed with sheep wool, and started a fire. He cooked up a fish for himself, and leaned back against the warmth of Toothless' hide to watch the stars. They were on a steep cliff, but there was an old disused boat dock further down that the Vikings were able to tie their ships to, and a path that led to the top of the cliff. There was also a worn trail a little further in, worn down by horses over a long period of time. There was a large castle off in the distance as well that blocked out the setting sun. It was a very long way away, but Hiccup couldn't help but wonder if it belonged to the King of the mainland. He wondered if the stories were true - that he sat on a throne made of the bones of dragons, and that he drank wine from the skull of a Viking infant. And other such nonsense - of course he didn't do that. But Hiccup still didn't want to be caught out here by himself without his Viking family to back him up.<p>

The sun disappeared, and the only light was that of the tiny crackling fire. Hiccup lay down on his sheep wool mattress, and Toothless covered him with a big black wing, blocking out any wind or rain, should it decide to fall. A living breathing tent, with an in-built heating system. Hiccup smiled to himself - it didn't get better than this.

* * *

><p>AN:**

>Hello strangers, remember me? If not, well then dayum, I have been gone a while :S

>I've not written a crossover before, so this should be very interesting, but I have the greatest love for both of these movies, and I can't get this idea out of my head, so here it is. Chase the Wind.

>Every chapter is named after a song from either How to Train Your Dragon or Brave, because the soundtracks sound so amazing - especially when they're played together. So yes, the song for this chapter is 'Ready the Ships', from HTTYD.
Please leave a lovely review on the way out, it would make my day. Let me know if I can improve anything, or if you liked something, I will always answer every review personally. **

**Stay Shiny x
>KnutCase

2. Merida Rides Away

Chase the **Wind**

Chapter Two; Merida Rides Away

~Merida~

'I'll be fine. I've got a sword and my bow,' Merida assured her mother, pulling a travelling cloak tight around her neck. Elinor still looked worried for her daughter, as she always did whenever she left. But this time she was going alone, to a strange castle without her family.

>'Do you have to? For such a long time? I worry about you, you know,'<p>

'Mum,' Merida flicked her hair back off her face. 'I'm going to be married in a month. I just want this last bit of freedom... please,'

>The princess had made peace with the fact â€" accepted it. She knew that she would have to marry someone soon, she was nearly seventeen and the lords wouldn't wait much longer.<p>

'I know. Just please be careful,' Elinor kissed her daughter on the head, and watched from the window as Merida packed Angus' saddlebags with her things and then took off through the castle gates.

>'Be careful,' she muttered, putting a hand to her head.<p>

* * *

><p>Merida couldn't keep the smile from her face as the wind whipped her hair around her face and neck. It was bittersweet â€" she knew none of the lords sons would let her go riding and shooting. They all wanted a wife to mother their children. The thought made her shudder. She turned Angus towards the coast and jammed her heels into his side. The horse took off, hooves thundering on the worn path. She was on her way to visit the Castle of the Dingwall Clan. It had been organised between the four Clans that each of the suitors would have

Merida to themselves for a week. After each of them had had their chance to impress her, it was up to Merida who she would marry. She wasn't entirely happy about the whole situation, but it had gotten her two extra years of freedom.<p>

'Angus, woah,' she murmured to the horse, and he slowed up. They had made good progress, getting further than she had expected to in a few short hours. They stood still at the fork in the road, Merida chewing her lip. Did she want to go to the coast and take the long way around, or cut across the land, going through villages and farms. They could give her shelter, and food, or she could hunt for herself... sleep under the stars.

A grin split her face, and she nudged Angus in the side with her heels, and he took off towards the coast.

The smell of the salt water brought back memories from her childhood - playing in the water with her dad, even teaching the triplets how to swim. She was so lost in thought that when Angus skidded to a halt, she was nearly thrown over his neck, only just hanging on.

>'Ahh!' she cried, flipping her hair off her face and looking for the sign of the horses distress. It was a little blue light to her right. It made a noise like a child sighing, and she stared. Then it vanished. Another appeared a little further back.<p>

Her past had told Merida that the wisps would take care of her... lead her to her fate. Perhaps she wasn't to marry one of the Clan suitors after all... She jammed her heels into Angus' sides, and he took off, following the wisps. Merida urged him to go faster, riding away from the setting sun. The wisps glowed brightly in the dark as they rode on, for hours it seemed, her eyes peeled for anything out of the ordinary. That was when she spied the campfire. Angus snorted nervously and stopped dead. Merida knocked an arrow, and tried to urge the horse forward. He wouldn't budge.

>'Angus, move,' she hissed.<p>

'Who's there?' called a voice, and she froze.

>'I'm armed,' she called back, aiming her arrow in the direction of the voice.
'...there's no need for that... I won't hurt you... where are you?'

Merida realised that she was in the dark, and the boy couldn't see her - it was obviously a boy. His voice wasn't deep enough to be a fully grown man. She slipped off of Angus, putting away her bow so she could hold the horse and her sword, just in case. A girl can never be too careful. The boy finally came into view - he was taller than her, but probably just as skinny, in his brown vest and big boots.

>'Hi,' he said, extending a hand. 'My name's Hiccup...what's yours? '<p>

'Hiccup?' she repeated. 'What kind of a name is Hiccup?'

>'Yeah. Tell me about it,' he replied, as if he didn't understand either.
'You talk funny,' Merida told him, lowering the sword. She noticed that the only weapon had with him was a tiny hunting knife - it wouldn't hit anything vital even if he pushed it through her stomach all the way to the hilt.

'You talk like my dad,' Hiccup replied, and Merida frowned. 'You look

like you're running away,' he continued, and the princess shook her head.

>'I'm going to visit some of the other Clans. What Clan are you from?' she asked, sheathing the sword and tugging a reluctant Angus even closer to the boy and the fire.
'Um... we're not from any of your Clans. We came from an island a long way from here,' Hiccup told her, sitting down by the fire and gesturing for her to join him.

'...we?' She frowned, looking around. Angus snorted with fear as a big dark shape behind Hiccup moved, and a pair of bright yellow eyes lit up. It's hide looked leathery, with massive wings folded against it's back and a long tail that was curled around it's front feet. She screamed, and drew her sword again, backing away slowly. At the sight of the weapon, the dragon bared it's teeth and growled.

>'Hey wait, no, he won't hurt you... Toothless, calm down buddy,' Hiccup said soothingly, rubbing the creature's head.<p>

'What the devil is that?' she asked, holding her sword out defensively.

>'This is Toothless... he's my dragon, and he's a friend... '<p>

Dragon? Dragons were the tales of stories - her mother had warned her that if she wasn't in bed on time then the dragons would come and gobble her up. She just assumed they were creatures of myth - and yet there was one right in front of her. A massive lizard, probably able to breathe fire and swallow her without chewing. She noticed his damaged tail, replaced with a man-made sail, like on a ship, and then his expertly crafted saddle.

>'...is he dangerous?' she asked, and Hiccup assured her that he wouldn't harm her. Merida sheathed the sword, but kept her bow beside her just in case. She sat down opposite Hiccup and warily watched the dragon, who had calmed down significantly since she had put the sword away. In fact, he almost looked cute.<p>

* * *

><p>~Hiccup~

'How did you tame a beastie like that?' the girl asked, pushing her hair out of her eyes. Boy, she had a lot of hair.

>'Dragons aren't that hard to tame, actually. They're just like big dogs, or horses that breathe fire and fly,' he replied, and she looked up at Toothless in awe. 'So you never told me your name.'
'Oh, sorry. I'm Merida.'

>'Nice to meet you. Have you eaten? '<p>

She shook her head, and Hiccup skewered one of the fish and put it over the fire.

>'So...what're you doing out here all by yourself?' he asked, and she looked at him curiously, as though he was supposed to already know.
'I told you, I'm going to visit the Clan MacIntosh...'

>'Clan MacIntosh?' Hiccup asked, thoroughly confused. A suspicious smile split Merida's face.
'That's right, you're not from around here, are ye?' Hiccup shook his head.

'Well, there are four great Clans - Macintosh, Dingwall, MacGuffin and Dun Broch. The King is of Clan Dun Broch, and the others submit

to his rule. Every year we have the games up at the castle and all the Clans come together and fight like there's no tomorrow to prove that they have the most skilled and strong Clan. It's been a way for us to see each other and entertain and have a bit of fun watching them compete,' Merida explained.

>'What do you do in the games?' Hiccup asked, eyeing her bow.
'What?'

'In the games... what do you do?'

>'Nothing... women aren't allowed to compete, silly. It isn't ladylike,'
'Oh,' Hiccup couldn't help but smile. Astrid would have a tantrum if she wasn't allowed to show off just how well she could kick the butts of all the Clans without even tiring. No one could best a Viking at feats of strength, surely?

>'Women are just as tough as the men where I come from. Some would say tougher. We needed them to know how to fight and defend Berk from the dragons when they attacked,'<p>

Merida turned her head to the side.

>'So you weren't always friends with the dragons?' Hiccup launched into the story of how he had found Toothless and ended the feud between the dragons and the vikings, downplaying his part in the defeat of the Green Death*.
The redhead listened attentively, obviously captivated with the story. It made Hiccup a little shy, and this confused him. He hadn't really thought about the enormity of what he had done for his village - even sacrificing his own body for them.

>'And...Toothless caught me and managed to save me... except for my leg,' He touched the cool metal of his prosthetic, almost fondly. It made him even closer to Toothless - he was the only one who could ride the dragon, and in turn, Toothless was really only suited to carry him, both of them missing a piece of themselves. They were one and the same.<p>

'That's awful brave of you,' Merida said, and Hiccup shrugged. 'My father is missing his leg too. He doesn't have anything as fancy as that though,'

>She got up and crossed to the other side of the fire so she was sitting next to him (but still being wary of Toothless, who was snoring happily), and she leaned over to examine his replacement foot.
'Does it hurt?'

>'Not anymore. It just took a bit of getting used to. I rode Toothless pretty much everywhere those first few months.'<p>

Merida grew quiet, and Hiccup yawned. Angus had gathered up some courage and settled opposite the dragon, keeping an eye on Merida.

>'I think I might go to sleep, if you don't mind. It's late, and I have to travel a long way tomorrow.' She unclasped her cloak and used it as a blanket, and Hiccup nudged Toothless in the side gently. Merida let out a little gasp of shock as a big black wing stretched over the two of them, blocking out the fire and the night sky.
'Goodnight Merida. Night Toothless.' The Nightfury purred, Hiccup patted his side affectionately.

>'Goodnight Hiccup,' Merida said quietly before rolling over and going to sleep.<p>

* * *

><p>AN:

>So, second chapter. I've had to move this plot rather quickly, because I want to get through so much without dragging it on and on and on. So yes, Merida and Hiccup have met. Will Merida get over her fear of Toothless? Will Hiccup fall in love? Will the villagers of Berk drown at sea? Will Angus get apples?>You will have to wait for the next chapter. Sorry, :]

****FUN FACT: * ****

>The great dragon at the end of the HTTYD movie is commonly referred to as 'The Red Death'. I dislike this, for several reasons. The main one being that it isn't actually red. It's greenish-grey. So why would you name it the Red Death? Secondly, in Cressida Cowells original novels, it was called the Green Death. Therefore, I'm gonna stick with green, coz I like it better. Finally, I listen to the soundtrack, like, everyday at least. And the piece of music at the end is called 'Battling the Green Death', so I'm gonna go with that. It is an awesome piece of music, you guys should totally get on that.

****Colours aside, that is the end of this chapter. ****

>Stay Shiny, lovelies.

>xx Maury

3. The Cove

****Chase the** **Wind****

****_Chapter Three; The Cove_****

~Hiccup~

'Good dragon... nice dragon... let a wee lass out... please...'

Hiccup woke up to Merida trying to coax Toothless awake. He was awake, Hiccup knew that, but he seemed to be amusing himself by keeping the girl trapped under his wing.

'Oh. Good morning Hiccup. Please... make yer dragon let me out,' she asked sweetly. Her tangled curls were everywhere, and she had her thick cloak draped over one arm. The Viking elbowed Toothless in the side, and he snorted and lifted his wings. Merida smiled gratefully and greeted an anxious looking Angus by petting his nose.

>'Well. Thankyou for sharing yer fire with me, and for letting me meet yer dragon,' Merida said, tucking some of her hair behind her ear. It fell out again, and she didn't bother to fix it.<p>

'Yeah, sure. It was nice to meet you,' Hiccup smiled, running his hands through his hair. 'So um. Will you be back along this way...any time soon?'

Merida shrugged, slinging her handsome bow across her chest. 'I hope so. I don't really want to be going to visit the Clans, so I might come back a little earlier than I'm supposed to. If you don't mind?'

'No, course not. Did you wanna stay for breakfast, or do you have to go?' Hiccup offered, and Merida smiled at him again. He was surprised

to find his breath catch in his throat - she really was very pretty.

'Sure. What're we having?'

xXx

~Merida~

Merida watched with anticipation as Hiccup climbed up onto the dragon. Toothless wriggled excitedly underneath him, and the princess twisted her skirts around in her hands nervously. She gasped as Toothless leapt into the air, the wind filling his massive wings and Hiccup whooping in glee.

'Be careful!' she cried, and he waved a hand.

'I'm perfectly safe. Toothless would never let me get hurt,' he assured her as they flew around her. Merida reached out and touched the soft leathery hide of Toothless' tail.

She ran up and down the coastline watching as Toothless dived in and out of the water, eating his fill of fish and then as he brought another large one back for - she assumed - both her and Hiccup.

'That was amazing!' she cried, running to greet them. She didn't even hesitate when she approached the dragon, and instead patted him on the head. The dragon purred happily, arching into her affectionate touch.

'He likes you,' Hiccup told her, unhooking his prosthetic foot and sliding down. She noticed that he stumbled a little, but he was holding a decent looking fish, so she let it slip from her mind.

They ate the fish quickly, as she had to get going soon. The Clans were waiting, after all. She stood up, flicking her hair out of her eyes in a well practiced sweep of her arm, and gasped.

>'Oh, my stars!' she whispered, her hands over her mouth.<p>

A thick swarm of dragons were approaching the cliffs, dragging more Viking ships than she had ever seen in her life.

>'Toothless isn't the only dragon in your village, then?' she asked, and Hiccup shook his head.
'Nope. Nearly everyone has one. You might wanna...go. Vikings can be cranky after a long boat ride,'

Her heart sank a little. If it were dragons, or stuffy sons of lords, she'd pick dragons any day. But she had promised her mother that she would approach her marriage problem maturely, and like a future Queen would.

>'Okay, well, we'll go now so you can meet your family. It was very nice meeting you, Hiccup.'<p>

'And you, Merida,' he replied, and they shook hands awkwardly, not sure of what to do. Merida sighed inwardly and packed her things back into Angus' saddlebags, then realised she didn't have anything to stand on.

>'Um. Can I have some help?'<p>

'Oh, of course,' Hiccup agreed, holding out his entwined hands for her to stand on. He boosted her up, and she smiled a thanks.

>'Well. Goodbye,' she said, glancing out at the thunder of dragons. She nudged Angus with her heels, and he started up a slow walk away from the boy and his dragon.<p>

'Um... Merida?'

>She whipped around so fast that she hurt her neck. 'Yes?'
'Did you wanna, maybe...come back to visit? You know, once all the others are here and settled down? You can meet all my friends, and the dragons?'

The princess grinned, and her heart soared with excitement. 'I'd love that, thankyou. We'll be back when we're done visiting the Lords, right Angus?'

>Hiccup grinned at her, and she smiled back at him sweetly. He was a nice guy, she'd admit that. Why couldn't he be a Lord too? She could spend hours learning about the dragons with him. She waved in farewell, and Angus took off down the coast, heading for Clan Macintosh.<p>

xXx

~Hiccup~

'Have you met any of the Scots yet?' Stoick asked, his hands on his hips as he watched the Vikings try to piece together a makeshift village for the night. The dragons had basically gone to sleep, exhausted from all their hard work pulling the ships. Stoick hadn't wanted to risk staying on the water for too long, and the dragons had keener senses than the vikings did anyway, knowing where to find land.

'Just one of the girls from one of the villages around here. She explained a bit to me about how the whole kingdom works.'

Stoick raised an eyebrow. 'Was she pretty?'

Hiccup stared at him. 'Uhm... yeah, I guess...what does that have to do with anything!?''

'I don't know. I was your age when I married your mother. I just think she'd like to see you settling down,'

'Can we not have this conversation right now? Hiccup hissed. Astrid was coming closer, and he certainly didn't want _her_ starting up the topic of marriage.

'Hey. I just finished putting up our place. You wanna see?' she asked the minute she was close enough.

Not particularly, thought Hiccup, but he went with her anyway, Toothless trotting behind him, looking around - probably for his new redheaded friend. Merida had been on his mind too, all morning in fact. She was ever so pretty. He felt like a teenager all of a sudden.

'Hiccup? Are you listening to me?'

'Huh?'

'I said, do you like it?' Astrid shifted her weight to her back leg and crossed her arms. Hiccup looked at the little hut. It would do, he supposed. 'I mean, obviously once the dragons are rested we can make it bigger and a bit sturdier, but it'll hold for a few days until they get their strength back at least,'

"Mm. It's good, thankyou,' Hiccup kissed her lightly on the cheek, making her smile slightly.

'And... who knows? We could always make it bigger than the one we had back on Berk...?'

'What was wrong with the one we had on Berk?'

'Well, I don't know... but if we wanted to...maybe...add a few little vikings to our family?'

Hiccup stared at her. 'I'm sorry... what? We're not even married... look, I'm not having this conversation. Thanks for building us a place,' he added, climbing on Toothless' back. He needed to clear his head, and flying was the only way he knew how.

xXx

~Merida~

'M'lady...?'

Merida rolled her eyes. She wished she was back at the cliffs with Hiccup and Toothless. She hadn't told them she was a princess, and it was nice being treated like a regular person for once.

>'Young Macintosh, pleasure to see you again,' she said politely, gritting her teeth. She hated these niceties - what was so wrong about speaking her mind?
'Call me...-' He paused dramatically. '...Ian'

'Uhuh. You've got three days to make your mark,'

>'Three da-?' Ian frowned. The original arrangement was a whole week, but Merida had sped it up a little so she could spend a few days with Hiccup and the dragons before going to the other Clans.<p>

'Yes, the time has been shortened. I'm sorry we didn't forewarn you, but it was a sudden decision.'

His face fell a little, and Merida suddenly felt bad. There was a chance she might end up married to the man in front of her, so she may as well start this whole thing with a slightly more positive attitude.

'...I'm sorry,' she said, sinking into one of the chairs beside her. 'I didn't mean to be rude. I'm a little nervous, to be honest,'

'Why are you nervous?' he asked, sitting opposite her. 'You don't have to try to impress a princess,'

She gave a little laugh, and tucked her hair behind her ear. 'Well, um. What did you want to do today, then?'

'Well, I had an idea...'

xXx

Merida gave a loud whoop, gripping Angus' mane as the horse leapt over a fallen tree. Ian Macintosh wasn't far behind on his big chestnut stallion, laughing along with her. Because of his hundreds of adoring fans, he'd taught her his own secret way out of the castle and into the stables. There, they'd saddled up and escaped the bustle of the city. Apparently, Ian wasn't as shallow as she'd originally thought.

xXx

****A/N:****

>Haha! I finally finished it. Sorry bout taking forever, but school started back up again for the year last week. This one's a bit shorter.

>I'm a little bit iffy about these chapters, I can't wait to get to the exciting ones. But they're all planned out in my little book. Speaking of which;

****FUN FACT:** Everything to do with this fic is written down in my little black book. Over half of that writing is done with an old-fashioned quill and ink. I find that it does wonders for inspiring creativity. But I carry it with me to classes and on buses and to the hairdressers and everything. When I'm at home, it sits on my desk, guarded very well by the stuffed Toothless that sits on my bass case. :P**

****ALSO,** not a fun fact, but some amazing news indeed. The Pixar Head of Animation and Pixar Head of Story are coming to Australia, Melbourne to be precise, and do a two-day workshop. It's 600 bucks a ticket, and I AM GOING! So excited. Anyway,**

****Leave me a lovely little review, if you please. ****

>OR follow me on tumblr or DA, both of which are on my profile.

****Stay Shiny****

>KnutCase

4. This is Berk

****Chase the Wind****

****Chapter Four; This is Berk****

__~Hiccup~__

Hiccup woke up to Astrid curled up against his side, his shirt held tight in her fist. They had had a pretty loud fight the night before, and he felt guilt gnawing at his stomach. He had loved her dearly for a long time, but something told him she wasn't right, and he didn't know how to break it to her. And, with her head resting on his chest, her pretty face relaxed and peaceful, wispy blonde hair in a complete mess, he could see that he couldn't break her heart.

It wouldn't be hard to find another husband for Astrid - she was beautiful, strong willed and excellent on dragonback. A true Viking, right down to her bones. And as for himself, well he was the son of the chief, the first dragon rider and a damn clever man. And not particularly unfortunate looking since he grew a bit taller and a bit wider. He would have no problems finding a willing wife, he just didn't want anyone from Berk.

Stoick probably had plenty of other women in mind.

Not that his father had a say in who he chose to spend the rest of his life with.

The thought made him smile, and at that point, Astrid woke up. She kissed his jaw.

"What're you smiling about?" She asked, and he shrugged.

"Dunno. Hey, I really am sorry about yesterday. I didn't mean to snap"

"It's okay," she reassured him, sitting up. "The move has been hard for everyone, and I know you're stressed about going to see the King"

"Wait, I have to see the King?" He asked, suddenly sitting up. Astrid brushed her hair out of her eyes.

"Well, I don't really know, I just assumed..."

Hiccup leapt out of the bed and got dressed without a word. Toothless was waiting for him just outside, dozing in the morning sun.

He climbed atop the dragon and they galloped through the little makeshift village, which was slowly taking shape.

"Dad?" Hiccup called, once Stoick was in view. The chief was fixing a new saddle to Thornado, preparing for the long trip to the castle.

"What's wrong?"

"Do I have to travel with you to appeal to the king?"

Stoick shook his massive head, and Hiccup relaxed instantly.

"I want you here. You need to learn how to chief if you're to take over one day, and I think that Nightfury of yours might be a bit too intimidating. He's grown a fair bit since you first got him, you know."

Hiccup patted Toothless' head affectionately, grateful that he didn't have to go along.

"I will take Astrid and Stormfly though, if it doesn't bother you"

"No, not at all." It would give him time to sort things out in his head.

xXx

"Hiccup is in charge in my absence. Keep building up the village, I want it looking more like home when I come back." Stoick said to the group of Vikings before him, then he turned to Hiccup, for more specific instructions.

"Take the dragons out hunting, get them used to the terrain and the different animals here, and map out the area. Any other Thunderdrums can go fishing as well, down the cliff. Make sure our livestock is properly taken care of, and keep everyone happy and fed. Gobber is here to help if you need him to"

"Dad, I'll be fine. Just don't scare anyone with the dragons. The girl I met before was terrified of Toothless."

"That big kitten of yours? She should meet a real dragon" Stoick chuckled, and Thornado growled in agreement. Toothless snorted, annoyed.

"If I remember correctly, you were all terrified of Nightfuries back before we made peace with the dragons,"

Stoick didn't reply, only clapped his son on the shoulder (with such force, might I add, that Hiccups knees nearly buckled) and turned his dragon to face the direction of the castle. Then he took to the air with a mighty roar, followed by the other Vikings. Astrid kissed him lightly on the cheek before taking off with Stormfly and settling in formation just in front of Snotlout and Hookfang.

Hiccup waited until they were out of sight, then everyone dispersed. They had a lot of work to do if they were to have the village up to scratch by the time Stoick returned.

xXx

~Merida~

Merida tried in vain to make her hair behave itself, muttering curses to herself as it refused to comply. She knew it wasn't ladylike to curse, but if a king could do it (and she had heard her father curse plenty) then surely a princess could get away with it every now and again, if no one was around to hear.

She was having dinner with Ian tonight, just the two of them, as it was Merida's last night with Clan Macintosh, and it was his last chance to impress her. She had chosen a gown of deep red. It was very pretty, but also very heavy, and she rarely wore it, but red was the colour of the Macintosh clan, so she thought it was fitting.

One of the servant women led her down to the small dining room they would share, a much more intimate place than the massive dining hall. Ian was already waiting, dressed quite handsomely in his traditional Scottish tartan. He looked very uncomfortable, which made her crack a smile. He bowed low and kissed her hand, then held out her chair for her to sit.

They were served a beautiful banquet of fowl with a sweet sauce, roasted vegetables and other dishes she hadn't tried before. They were even allowed a glass of wine, which loosened both their tongues

until they were speaking freely, without forethought.

"What you did was so brave," he told her, grinning. "I mean, with the lords... breaking tradition and all. I couldn't have done it,"

"You were first to back me up though," Merida countered, picking at the remains on her plate.

"Why wouldn't I?" He asked, placing his hand on hers. Merida's face grew red slightly, and Ian continued.

"Ever since I saw you, princess, I wanted to marry you. Not because I could become king, but because you are not only beautiful, but you have this...fiery passion, a determination in your eyes... I knew I just had to win your hand...or your heart,"

xXx

Merida folded her red gown and gently laid it her saddlebag, running her fingers over the soft fabric. Ian's confession at dinner had made her feel prickly inside, almost guilty. She didn't love him. They had become good friends over the last few days, but she didn't feel that burn in her heart that she always expected to feel. And after hearing how he felt about her, it hurt to think about turning him down.

Was this why marriages were arranged in the past? To prevent heart break?

xXx

Angus shook his head and stood patiently as one of the men saddled him up and loaded Merida's things onto his back. She watched patiently, then turned to Ian and his family.

"Thankyou for having me. I'm sorry I couldn't stay longer, it's been a real pleasure" she addressed Lord Macintosh and his wife. Then she turned to Ian. He bowed to her, as was custom, but she hugged him tightly around the waist anyway.

"I'll see you in a few weeks?" she said, and he smiled at her and nodded. She climbed onto Angus' back and touched her heels to his side, and he darted forward. They rode hard and fast, and soon Castle Macintosh was long behind them. By cutting her trip short by two days, it meant she could visit Hiccup and the dragons for two days before heading out to Clan Dingwall.

xXx

~Hiccup~

"Careful...don't scare them" Hiccup instructed as they tried to move the sheep from their temporary corral into the new, permanent one before it got too dark. The village was taking shape now, considering its inhabitants were used to rebuilding quickly and efficiently. By working together, everyone had a home, and a great hall was currently underway. But Hiccup didn't need to be standing over people's shoulders bossing them around when they knew what they were doing, so he was helping Fishlegs and some of the others move the livestock.

"How do you suppose your dad is going with the king?" Fishlegs asked, and Hiccup shrugged.

"Vikings aren't really well known for their diplomacy skills, so we'll probably have some kind of war on our hands in the next couple of days"

Fishlegs laughed, even though he couldn't tell if Hiccup was being serious or not.

"Hiccup! There's someone headed our way!" cried one of the Viking men. Hiccup leapt onto Toothless' back in a heartbeat and followed him. He cracked a smile as he recognised Angus and, of course, Merida's mass of orange curls.

"Don't panic, she's a friend," Hiccup announced, and everyone gathered curiously. Angus started to panic as they neared the unfamiliar village, where the dragons watched curiously.

Merida dismounted a little way away and led Angus the rest, talking to him quietly the whole time. When she got close enough to see Hiccup grin at her, she sped up a little and gave him a hug.

"Told you I'd come back" she said, and Hiccup told her he was glad she did. Then he quickly introduced her to the rest of the village, and gave her a tour.

"Obviously there's still a lot to do, but we're getting there."

"It's amazing...I know we couldn't have gotten all this up so fast. And there's so many dragons!"

Hiccup smiled, her excitement contagious. He briefly described the different types of dragons, and she wanted to see them all, so he took her to where they nested. Fishlegs followed, his eyes glued to Merida.

"The main dragons we use for riding are the Deadly Nadder, the Hideous Zippleback, the Gronckle and the Monstrous Nightmare. Toothless is a Nightfury, but he's the only one we've ever come across..."

"Wow... That's amazing."

"Have you eaten? We've just roasted a couple of deer..."

Merida realised she was starving, and nodded eagerly. She sat around a big bonfire and listened to the Vikings tell stories and tear at the deer. Hiccup simply smiled modestly when Spitelout began the story of how he had defeated the Green Death. Merida listened, in awe, as she heard the story from someone else's point of view.

"And this great fireball bigger than the whole island of Berk knocked us all off our feet as the great beast exploded, and Hiccup had vanished. Once the flames had cleared, we found that Toothless had rescued him, and we brought him home. He s didn't wake up for a week... We were all pretty sure we'd lost him... But nothing could take down our dragon boy"

Merida applauded the story harder than anyone, and they stayed up until it was well and truly dark. Then Hiccup showed her to his house.

"You can stay up here," he told her, showing her his and Astrid's bed.

"Are you sure? I don't want to put you out of your bed..."

"No, I've got another one downstairs, so don't worry," he lied. Once she was settled, Hiccup went downstairs and curled up with Toothless in front of the fire.

"Night, bud"

Toothless purred in response.

****A/N****

****Here we are, chapter four. I do apologise for the strange spacing, my iPad really won't let me do stuff the easy way. Also, a big thankyou to Suzettes Blue for beta ing this for me.****

****Anyway, FUN FACT****

****I hate Astrid. I really do. She irks me up the wall. So it's really really hard to write her in a likeable way. I'm trying really hard, but as some of you saw in the last chapter, I sometimes fail at it. ****

****Anyway, I wanna get off this machine.****

****Stay Shiny****

****Reviews are beautiful****

****Love Maury****

5. We've Both Changed

****Chase the Wind**_**
>

__****Chapter Five; We've Both Changed****__

__~Queen Elinor~__

Queen Elinor lifted her skirts to an unladylike height as she ran through the halls of the castle. Maudie had told her she was needed in the Throne Room, and it was urgent. She dropped the skirts and pushed open the doors, composing herself.

She first saw Fergus, sitting on his throne with a scowl on his face, his chin in his hand. Then she saw the Vikings. Dressed in their crude garb, armed to the teeth, and headed by a fearsome looking man who rivalled her husband in sheer size.

And he was seated atop a snarling dragon, clearly uncomfortable with

being indoors and surrounded by unfamiliar people.

"What's going on here?" She asked, and Fergus' face softened a little now that he had his wife there to mediate.

"These Vikings have a request for us" the king replied, sounding wary.

"My lady Queen," began the Viking respectfully. "We know our two clans haven't had a pleasant history. But we come to you in our time of need."

Fergus gestured for the chief to continue.

"I am Stoick the Vast, head chief of the Vikings of Berk. Our island can no longer support us, and we come to you in peace, and ask for you to allow us to settle here"

Fergus exchanged a look with Elinor. The Queen was still looking at the dragon, her eyes wide.

"We have an encampment on the coast, a few hours flight from here. There are between eighty and one hundred of us, as well as the dragons"

"Ordinarily, I wouldn't have many hesitations... We are civil men, and happy to provide assistance to those in need. However, these creatures worry me. Should I consider them a threat? Even with that dragon alone, you could have this throne room in a manner of minutes."

"Thornado will not harm any living creature, unless I gave him permission," Stoick replied, touching the dragon affectionately on the head. "And the same goes with the other dragons. We have them trained very well, and understand them better than any other on this earth"

Fergus nodded, interested. Elinor turned to him.

"Well?"

Fergus thought for a moment, and said something quietly to his wife. She whispered something back. Fergus stood up, and addressed Stoick directly.

"In a few weeks, we are holding the Highland Games. After these Games, our daughter, the princess, will choose from her suitors who she will marry. Do you have a son, Stoick?"

xXx

__~Merida~__

Merida snuggled deep into the pillow, breathing in the unusual scent and pulling her legs up to her chest. The bed was incredibly uncomfortable, where was she?

She opened her eyes and gasped. Toothless was staring at her curiously. She sat up, and pushed her hair out of her eyes, grinning as the dragon nudged her gently with his nose.

"I'm getting up, calm down" she giggled, and he wiggled his hindquarters in excitement before leaping down the stairs. He politely turned his head while she pulled on her riding gown, and when she was ready, she went downstairs with him faithfully at her side. Hiccup was nowhere to be found. She looked through the whole house, then outside.

A few of the Vikings said good morning, or hello, and she politely replied. Toothless led her between houses and past livestock to where a large piece of construction had taken place. Hiccup was sharpening a chisel, surrounded by papers weighed down by rocks.

"Morning!" Merida called, and he smiled at her.

"Hey. Sleep well?"

"Better than you, I think. There's only one bed in your house, you liar" she accused playfully. Hiccup shrugged.

"I'm not gonna make a guest sleep on the ground" he told her, going back to sharpening his chisel. Toothless wandered off to examine the building process.

"What're you doing?" Merida asked, sitting beside him and looking at the drawings.

"They're finishing the great hall. Normally it would take us much longer, but we've enlisted the help of a Timberjack who tagged along with us. It's been cutting trees all morning. We'll have it perfect by this evening, if everything goes smoothly"

"So what're these for?" She examined the drawings. Some were of the Vikings fighting the dragons, and others were of them riding the dragons. There was another that was clearly all the Vikings rising up against the Green Death. She noticed that Hiccup had, once again, downplayed his involvement in the event.

"Once everything is up, I'll carve these into the pillars and paint them. Vikings are proud of their history, so to make this place feel like home, we need our past up for future generations to see, and learn from."

Merida smiled. A more permanent version of the tapestries in the castle. She had learned how to make a tapestry, but she still needed a bit of practice.

"You're very good" she complimented, and Hiccup smiled at her warmly. Toothless came back, and nudged Merida in the back of the legs impatiently. She patted his head, and he snorted impatiently, flicking his tail.

"He wants you to ride him," Hiccup told her, putting his charcoal down and scratching the dragon behind the ear. Merida stared at him.

"Ride? Like...I would ride Angus, or like you ride him?"

"He wants to fly. We normally go out for a bit each morning, but I had to get started on this. It's not fair for everyone else to work

while I mess around."

Fair enough, Merida thought, as Toothless looked up at her with large, pleading eyes.

"I don't know how to fly you, pet" she crooned, and his head drooped.

"Well... I could take you flying later in the day if you'd like?" he offered, and Merida felt the bottom of her stomach drop away. The idea terrified her, but also thrilled her. She could be the first Scot to ever ride a dragon... and she might not get another chance, after marrying one of the lords.

"I..."

Hiccup put a hand on her shoulder. His touch had an instant calming effect. He was a good friend.

"The offer is always there. We don't have to fly. However, you can take him hunting if you like?"

xXx

"I think my mother would skin me if she saw me like this..." Merida muttered, examining herself. Ruffnut had lent her an entire outfit that was designed for dragonback. It was a pair of brown pants (goodness, if her mother saw her wearing pants), light boots and a white shirt with the rigging vest that attached to Toothless' saddle. She slipped on her archery gloves and slung her quiver across her chest.

"Well, your mother isn't here. Just hold on, and let him take you where he needs to go. Riding dragons is a partnership, you have to listen to each other. He won't fly, because you can't work his tail, but he'll jump around and try. If he knocks you about too much, just hold on tight and shout at him to stop. He'll get the gist of what you want."

Merida nodded, sliding onto the saddle. Toothless hummed in anticipation, and Fishlegs was a few feet away with Meatlug, also willing to join the hunt. Even the twins were up for a bit of hunting. She slipped her feet into the stirrups, and leaned forward. Her bow was handed to her, and she was ready to go.

"Alright... as long as he doesn't take off on me, I should be alright...right?"

"Don't worry, we'll look out for you," Fishlegs offered. She smiled at him, and Hiccup stood back as Toothless spread his wings out to their full wingspan. She felt her heart beat loudly, and saw Fishlegs take off to the outskirts of the small village, then Toothless followed. At a slow gait at first, getting her used to the rhythm of his walk, then he sped up. After a rather large leap over a fallen tree, she laughed with glee. She caught the dragon giving her an amused look, and she patted his head, feeling exhilarated.

"This is amazing!" she cried, and Fishlegs and the twins both sped up their dragons in agreement.

xXx

~Hiccup~

"You've all done an amazing job, it looks even better than the one back home."

At the mention of Berk, faces dropped a little in spite of the triumph that was the new Great Hall. Only the Timberjack dragon seemed in a good mood. Twice the size of a Monstrous Nightmare, the Timberjack had been the first of its kind to take to the Vikings, and the villagers had taken to calling him Sharpwing.

"Come on guys, this looks fantastic! Fishlegs and the twins should be back soon, and then you'll all be rewarded with a deer or something. We'll eat it right here, in our Great Hall!"

This seemed to cheer the villagers up and they dispersed in a much happier mood. Hiccup frowned, wondering where Merida and Toothless were. They'd been gone for hours.

He approached Sharpwing, and gently petted his foreleg. The dragon lowered its great head and closed his eyes contentedly as Hiccup scratched his chin.

"You did good, big guy" he murmured, looking up at the skies. His face split into a grin as Ruffnut and Tuffnut came into view, their Zippleback carrying something much bigger than a deer. Fishlegs followed on Meatlug, a heavy stag in her jaws. Hiccup looked around for Toothless, and they burst out of the tree line a moment later, Merida's flame coloured curls bouncing around. As she got closer, Hiccup noticed all sorts of leaves and things tangled up in them.

"I ran out of arrows," the girl declared triumphantly, looking perfectly at home astride Toothless. The dragon himself looked exhausted, and basically flopped to the ground once he'd stopped moving. Merida leapt off his back as the other two dragons touched down, dropping their kills as well.

"That's the biggest boar I've ever seen..." Hiccup said, impressed. It had four arrows jammed in its body - three in its back and one planted firmly in its skull, diving right into its brain.

"You should have seen her!" Fishlegs grinned, jumping off his dragon with more agility than Hiccup has ever seen. "She basically took down that boar all by herself. She chased it and then Toothless jumped over it so she could shoot it in the head. It was incredible!"

"I've been hunting with my dad before," Merida shrugged. "And Toothless is such a good boy...a lot of fun to ride. I wish I had time to go for a fly before I had to leave..."

"Toothless and I could fly you to the other Clans?" Hiccup offered. Toothless gave him a look that clearly said he couldn't take another flight right now.

"What about Angus? I can't leave him here. And I think the Clans would really panic if I met them on a dragon."

Hiccup understood, but he didn't want to see his friend leave so

quickly.

"Don't worry, I'll be back in three or four days"

"Really?" He asked, and she nodded.

"Uhuh. Ruffnut, I'll give you back your clothes."

The female twin waved her hand.

"They're old ones that don't fit me anyway. Besides, you more than earned it" she grinned, patting the redhead on the back.

"Seems like you'd make a pretty good Viking, Merida" Hiccup grinned. She smiled sadly and shrugged.

"We'll, thankyou Ruffnut. I'll wear them to death," she promised, and then she headed back to Hiccups house, in order to pack her things and leave for Clan Dingwall.

"I like her," Ruffnut declared suddenly, then turned to help her brother haul the boar into the hall without another word. Hiccup smiled.

xXx

"Well, thanks for letting me stay, and ride your dragon. You should definitely take me flying when I come back," Merida said, hugging Hiccup tightly. Angus tossed his head impatiently.

"If you're not too scared," he teased, and she gave him a playful shove.

She mounted the horse, waved goodbye to the other Vikings (all of them had become very fond of the fiery redhead) and they took off, her quiver full of brand new arrows fashioned by Gobber.

"She'll be back, bud" Hiccup assured Toothless, who was keening softly. He had taken quite a liking to the girl, and had especially enjoyed their hunt through the trees.

"Attention everyone! The boar that Fishlegs, Ruffnut, Tuffnut and Merida brought back will be roasted on the spit for all of us to celebrate the completion of the Grand Hall. As for the deer, I want to give it to Sharpwing, for all his help with the hall. Does anyone have any objection to that?"

The villagers agreed with a cheer, and everyone watched as four of the Vikings brothat the stag to Sharpwings feet. The dragon swallowed it in two bites, then graciously lit the fire under the spit in a dramatic display of thanks. Gobber patted his leg as the dragon cleaned his maw of all blood, and the Vikings all settled into the Hall for their feast.

xXx

__~Merida~__

"Welcome to Clan Dingwall, Princess. It is an honour to have you here" Lord Dingwall said with a low bow. She curtsied, smiling like

her mother told her to, and wished with all her heart that she was back with the Vikings and the dragons, feasting on wild boar.

"A pleasure, m'lord," she replied.

"You've met my son, William?"

The dopey eyed blonde gave her a shy smile, revealing his huge buck teeth, and gently kissed her hand. She smiled politely, wondering what horrors she would have to face over the next few days.

xXx

****A/N****

****Well well well. A longer chapter this time. I'm trying to make them a bit longer, so it's a bit more enjoyable for you guys. I will admit, this chapter was a buttload of fun. I don't know why, but there's something about Merida running poor Toothless ragged in the thick trees hunting boars.****

****Next chapter is Wee Dingwall's chapter! Oh, the lords are so much fun. Especially MacGuffin, which is why I've saved him for last. Anyway, on with my notes...****

****FUN FACT; I play both Brave and HTTYD so much that my housemates are getting a bit sick of it. I'm pretty sure my boyfriend hides the DVDs on purpose, especially Brave. I wear the pants in my relationship though, so I always find it and watch it anyway. And when I'm sick, they can't complain, so I make the most out of it.****

****This chapter took maybe two days to write for some reason, I just had a massive brain fart and had to keep writing. Also big thankyou to Suzettes Blue for beta-ing. She is amazeface. I love her.****

****Love you all, you make this fic worth writing. Reviews make me cry with happiness.****

****Stay Shiny my lovelies.****

****x Maury****

****PS; If you review, tell me what dragon you would have if you could have one. I personally am partial to the Terrible Terror, but a Skauldron would be brilliant too.****

6. Astrid Goes for a Spin

****Chase the Wind****

Chapter Six; Astrid Goes for a Spin****

~Merida~

The princess stood awkwardly in the library of castle Dingwall. It was a rather substantial library, and she amused herself by perusing

the endless volumes of history, poetry and stories. She settled herself in a large red chair with a history book.

'That's one of my favourites,' said William, startling her. Merida smiled shyly and closed the book.

'I've never been very fond of history,' she told him, standing up for him. 'But I remember my father reading these old books, and I loved the pictures, paintings of the battles and the skills of the archers and swordsmen,'

'They were painted just for us by a lord many years ago. I remember him coming here to present us with the book. That's why I like it so much.'

'It's these accounts that made me want to be like my father,' Merida smiled, sitting down and offering the second chair to William.

'I admired the skill of the bow... the grace, and I wanted to be one of those archers. Ride into battle on a proud horse... A sword at my hip and my trusty bow in my hand. Silly, for a princess...but there you have it,'

'I always wanted to be one of the poets,' William confessed. 'I wanted to write beautiful pieces that would be taught to young ladies, and recited at gatherings, but I think my father had other plans. He wanted a son who could win in the games, make the name proud. A son worthy enough to win the hand of a princess, and one day become king...'

William met her gaze, smiling shyly. Merida smiled too, and gently touched his shoulder.

'I know I'm not handsome like Macintosh, or athletic like MacGuffin. But I like you, princess. And...forgive me for saying so...but I would like to make my father proud as well.'

Merida mentally slapped herself. How could she have been so silly, breaking tradition? Between Ian and William, she was guaranteed to break someone's heart. She leaned forward and softly kissed William on the cheek.

'I think you're lovely, William...' she told him quietly. He blushed a little, touching his cheek.

'So I stand a chance?' he asked quietly, and her smile widened.

'Most definitely. Now, William?'

'Yes princess?'

'Merida, please. Would you read to me, please?' she asked, putting the history book on the shelf and pulling out a thick book of poetry. William smiled and nodded.

'Of course...Merida,'

xXx

~Hiccup~

Toothless was in time out. He sulked on his bed, a little red patch of paint on his nose. Hiccup was painting a new banner for the Clan of Berk. It was black, with the crest of Berk painted in red. The crest was a dragon curled up, with a smudged looking saddle on its back, a last minute addition to remedy Toothless' curiosity.

He heard the front door swing open, and looked up to see Astrid, her axe on her shoulder. He noticed immediately that it was very blunt - an automatic check after working with Gobber.

'Hey... You're back. Are you alright?' Hiccup asked, standing up to meet her.

'We need to talk,' Astrid told him quietly. Hiccup had never seen her like this before. Her voice wavered like she was going to cry, and she looked like she would fall over at any moment, worn down with exhaustion. He sat her down at their kitchen table and settled beside her, gently rubbing her back.

'What's wrong?'

Was this it? The end of their relationship? Had she finally worked out that they wouldn't last?

'We can't be together anymore. You're...um...' Her eyes overflowed with tears. 'Your dad... he agreed to an arranged marriage...' Hiccup sat back, stunned.

'He...he what?'

xXx

Stoick was obviously feeling very guilty, wilting slightly under his son's furious glare.

'What have you done?' Hiccup demanded to know, voice quivering with anger.

'Hiccup, I...I didn't have a choice. The king ordered me to, and I have sworn to live under him like the other lords. I am truly very sorry, my son. But you will compete in the Highland Games, and then be presented as a suitor for the princess of Dun Broch.'

Hiccup sat down, his hand going to his head in shock.

'Mum wouldn't have wanted this...' He murmured, and Stoick sat beside him, putting a massive hand on his son's back.

'I know. But I didn't know what to do. As chief, and possibly king, you will learn this one day. Not every problem we face is easy, and we make the best of whatever the consequences of our actions are. It is the way of life, Hiccup,'

The young Viking sighed, his head in his hands.

'As it is...you are a bright young man, loyal and clever and fair. You have done things that no other Viking could have done. And I believe you are more than ready to be in a position of power. If you

aren't chosen by the princess, you will take over as chief of Berk when you return home.'

xXx

Hiccup crawled into bed beside Astrid, his arm snaking around her waist and pulling her closer to him. She was crying quietly, so he kissed her neck and her shoulder.

'I know we've had problems, Hiccup,' she whispered, and he nodded in agreement. He might not feel the same way he had about Astrid, but it killed him to see her so defeated. She rolled over so they were facing each other, him still holding her small body close to him, and her free hand playing with his dark brown hair.

'I know we've had problems. And I'm not stupid, I can feel us drifting apart. I don't know...what this will do to us. So I'm asking you...do you love me, Hiccup? Will you be with me?'

Hiccup sighed.

'I did. I thought you were all I ever wanted. But ...I just don't feel that spark any more,' he confessed. Astrid was overcome with a fresh wave of tears, and he felt her fingers clench his shirt.

'I sort of feel the same...' She told him, burying her face in his chest. 'But I don't know what I'd do without you, Hiccup. You're the only person I ever considered being with...'

Hiccup kissed the top of her head.

'You'll still be my best friend,' he whispered to her, and she nodded.

'Except for Toothless...' She replied, making him smile.

'Except for Toothless,' he replied. She smiled and hugged him tight.

xXx

~Merida~

_ "I stand alone on the hillside_
>The scent of heather about
>I am so free of the city
>That I leap and dance and shout

The curlew and the lapwing
>They look for a moment at me
>Then they whoop and dive together
>For they understand my glee"

William had the kind of voice that was soothing, that made poetry actually sound pretty. She could have listened to him reading to her all day. She briefly wondered if William even remembered that he was reading to someone, and wasn't just reading the book out loud to himself.

_ "I can fancy I hear them singing_

>As I see them flying along-
>"Here is a weary old fellow
>Who is still in love with our song

_ "Let us sing him our shrillest and wildest_
>That it may sink in his heart
>And be with him again in the city
>When he turns his face to depart"'

William glanced up at Merida, making sure she hadn't fallen asleep. She smiled widely at him, encouraging him to finish.

_ "And over moss and moorland,_
>They swoop and wheel and sing
>Til the very ferns beside me
>Begin to quiver and swing

_ And ever, as if from dreamland_
>The wind brings this echo along -
>"Here is a weary old fellow
>Who is still in love with our song"'

William closed the book and gently rested it on his knee.

'What do you think?' he asked, sounding hopeful.

'I might start liking poetry if it was you reading it, Will. You're very good at it,' she complimented, sitting up and moving her hair out of her eyes.

'It's what I love. You're good at archery for the same reasons, no doubt...'

Merida nodded, standing up and stretching her legs. William put the book away, and joined her at the door.

'Would you accompany me to the dining hall?' He asked. Merida had noticed how polite he was, and it made her smile, and nod. Deep down, she knew she might break his heart, but she was enjoying his company too much to worry about it now.

How selfish, she was.

xXx

~Hiccup~

'Citizens of Berk!' Stoick addressed the Clan in his deep, booming voice. 'We are thriving. The completion of the village is a milestone, and I wish to thank each and every one of you for all your help with this. I know this has been difficult for all of you. But you have adapted well, like I knew you would. Let this be known; we may be under Scottish rule, but we will never forget who we are deep down. We are Vikings! And we will make our mark on this land!'

The Vikings cheered, stirred up by the leaders great passion. Hiccup groaned internally, knowing what came next.

'Now, in a month or two, the king holds his annual Highland Games. We will attend, and we will do our Clan proud. And my son, Hiccup, will

be vying for the hand of the Princess of Scotland herself!'

This was old news in the village. Snotlout had made sure to tell everyone that Hiccup and Astrid were no longer dating. He seemed to find some sort of twisted joy in the fact. But they still applauded Hiccup, all knowing that the decision had cost him a relationship that should have ended in marriage and a family of his own.

'Now, I know it hasn't been easy on the lad, but I know you will all support him, and we will all do our best to make our Clan stand out in the upcoming games. Gobber?'

'Yes?' replied the blonde Viking, stepping forward.

'We start training. Everyone who wishes to compete. If they want us to be compliant, well, we'll give them a Highland Gathering they won't forget,'

xXx

****A/N****

****Aha! I finally did it!**

>I just want all of you to realise how difficult this chapter was to write. If it weren't for the combined efforts of Suzette's Blue, the IntergalacticKoala and Rowan Kline, I wouldn't have this here for you today. They are all amazing people. I love you all.
Intergalactic Koala even did me a spot of fanart for this fic, which makes me simply thrilled. It's beautiful, I love it, and you should follow her on Tumblr, because she is amazeface. Link is in my profile!**

****FUN FACT:** This chapter was written in part, six times. I deleted all of it this morning, and with help, managed to pump out something I was happy with. And I tried as hard as I could to make Astrid likeable, so please let me know if I did well. It means so much to me to please you guys, and I want you all to be happy and enjoy my work.

****Thankyou for your patience, and all the reviews.**

>You really make me proud of my stuff, and also want to write for you.

****Stay perfectly Shiny, my lovelies****

>xo Maury

****PS:** If you leave a review, tell me which of the Lords you would ship Merida with? Macintosh, Dingwall or MacGuffin?

>I personally love Dingwall, but ship Merida & Macintosh, if Hiccup was out of the picture, of course.

7. The Downed Dragon

****Chase the Wind****

>Chapter Seven; The Downed Dragon_

~Merida~

It was a particularly cloudy day when Merida left the Dingwall Clan.

Angus was itching to get going, because he hadn't been ridden in three days. Merida thanked Lord and Lady Dingwall for their hospitality, and then turned to William. He had a package wrapped in brown paper and string in his hands, which he handed to her.

'I know you're not fond of poetry, but I put together this for you. The binding is a bit crude, and some of the poems aren't as good...but I thought you might like it,' he said, smiling at her affectionately. Merida gave him a tight, one armed hug.
>'Thankyou so much, William. I love it,'<p>

'Are you sure you can't stay longer?' William asked, taking her hand. Merida felt slightly guilty as she shook her head.
>'I'm sorry, William, but I have to see MacGuffin before tomorrow. There are things I must do before everyone gathers for the games.'<p>

With that, they parted ways, Merida feeling the same sadness gnawing at her stomach as Angus clopped away that she had felt leaving Clan Macintosh. But like the last time, the knowledge that she would be seeing Hiccup soon lifted her spirits. She dug her heels into Angus' sides, and the horse darted forward with a shrill whinny, happy to be running free again.

xXx

~Hiccup~

Hiccup was still getting used to waking up to the knowledge that he wouldn't find Astrid either beside him or downstairs waiting for him. They saw each other every day - she was throwing herself into training for the Games, and he was training a few of the younger children who had been deemed old enough to go through dragon training. Their days were filled with sad, but friendly smiles.

He made the bed with a yawn, patted Toothless on the nose and went downstairs. He made himself some breakfast and sat at his table, as Toothless leapt down to join him.
>'What're we gonna do today, bud?' he asked, and Toothless wiggled his haunches excitedly. 'You wanna fly? We can do that. Lets go!'

He climbed onto Toothless' back and they went outside. The Vikings were settling into life in the new village, and so were the dragons.

>'Hiccup!' It was Fishlegs. The boy came running to them, a worried expression on his face.
'Whats the matter?'
>'A dragon just died. We don't know why...'<p>

Hiccup slid off of Toothless and followed Fishlegs without a word. There was a little hut where ill dragons were treated by Fishlegs, who had dedicated his life to learning their physiology. Sometimes he couldn't save them though, and Hiccup knew he needed another dragon expert to help work out why - and he liked to keep an eye on his friend anyway. Fishlegs was a sensitive soul, and he always felt terrible if he couldn't do anything to save a dragon.

On the iron table was the tiny body of a very sickly looking Terrible Terror. Her scales should have been shiny and bright, but instead they were dull and lifeless, not the brilliant blue he expected to

see on a dragon her age. Her body was small, even for a Terror, which suggested that something had been wrong with her for a long time.

'She couldn't move when she came in here, but I couldn't make her any better. She died this morning. It's not something I've seen before' Fishlegs explained, sitting down at his desk. Hiccup could see at least two versions of the dragon manual as well as papers everywhere with Fishlegs' tiny scrawled notes on them. Even a detailed drawing of the anatomy of the dragon that Hiccup had once drawn him, after they dissected one that turned out to have swallowed something poisonous.

He turned the dragon over and examined her body, making his own notes and occasionally asking Fishlegs to compare. Finally, he said;

>'She laid eggs in the last few days. How long has she been here?'
'There were only two. It was while she was here, and I've put them in the other room with the fire. They're tiny, I don't think they'll make it, but I thought... Just in case,'

'No, I understand. Better to be safe than sorry. I think she was just the runt of her litter. Malnourished, just got the wrong end of the stick, really.'

>'Oh, you had that too. Either that, or some kind of infection.'
'You know, Fishlegs, you really don't need to be double checking all this stuff with me. You know more than I do about all this,' Hiccup told him with an amused smile, moving to the back room where the eggs were.

Fishlegs followed him, smiling.

>'I know. But I like having your opinion too, and besides, you're my friend Hiccup. You're always welcome here. And I was worried about you...after the whole Astrid thing...'
Hiccup approached the crackling fire, where the two tiny Terror eggs were. One had a tiny split in its shell.

'I'm okay, Fishlegs. I mean, arranged marriage isn't really our thing, and I don't really want to be a King, but if my dad says there was no way out of it, then I believe him. This egg has died,' he added, pointing to the cracked one. 'See that? Eggs don't crack unless they're hatching. This one was already dead and the fire split the shell.'

Fishlegs wrapped his hands in some rags and gently lifted the broken egg out of the fire. The rags singed a little, but he was otherwise unharmed.

>'Sorry little guy,' Fishlegs murmured, and Hiccup put a comforting hand on his shoulder.<p>

xXx

__~Merida~__

The Viking village was up and working hard when Merida got there. Angus tossed his head, still wary of the dragons but slowly getting used to their presence. There were more dragons than before, as well as Vikings she hadn't met before. They were all practicing on a rough, makeshift sports ground, while several Vikings on heavy set dragons built some kind of stone arena on the other side of the

village.

She was spotted by a young Viking woman with blonde hair and a fierce, determined expression.

>'Hey!' she called, shouldering her axe. 'Who are you?'
'Oh, hey Merida,' Tuffnut waved to her, and she waved back at him, sliding off of Angus' back.

'Hi, I'm Merida. I don't think we've met before,' Merida held out her hand, and the blonde took it.

>'Oh, you're a Scot. I'm Astrid.'
'Its nice to meet you. I was watching you spar before. You're very good,' Merida complimented, gently stroking Angus' nose to calm him down.

>'The best,' Astrid grinned at her. 'Do you spar?'<p>

'I'm handy with a sword,' Merida replied. 'Maybe we could have a round later?'

>'I'll hold you to it,' Astrid said, turning back to Tuffnut.<p>

She put Angus in one of the sheep pens that Hiccup had told her she could use the last time she was here, then went to find her one-legged friend. He wasn't in his house, or the hall, and he wasn't overseeing the arena building. Although Ruffnut was helping, and she was delighted to see Merida, and gave her a hug.

>'Do you know where Hiccup is? I haven't seen him today... '<p>

'He's helping Fishlegs with something, they've been in the Dragon Hut all morning,' Ruffnut told her, pointing to the hut furthest from the Great Hall. Toothless was curled up outside, watching a butterfly. Merida briefly wondered if her was considering chasing it, like the old stable cat chased mice back at home.

Toothless jumped up when he saw her, and she was almost bowled over by him. She scratched his neck and gave him a shove so she could get to her feet.

>'I missed you too, little pup,' she laughed. 'Where's Hiccup?'<p>

'I'm here.' Hiccup grinned, opening the door. 'I wondered what had made him so excited all of a sudden.' Merida quickly closed the space between them and gave him a tight hug.

>'How are you?' she asked, and he stood back to let her inside.
'I'm alright. We're just monitoring an egg. It might not make it.'

Merida peered around the room curiously, examining the drawings on the walls and reading the notes that were scattered across the floor. Fishlegs gave a bright grin when he saw her.

>'Merida! Uhm, hello!' he smiled, then turned his attention back to Hiccup. 'I think it's hatching!' he declared, making Merida's curiosity grow and Hiccup's eyes grow wide.
'What, now? Oh no... quick, we have to get it outside!' Hiccup suddenly ran to the room with the fire and carried an egg carefully out the back door. Fishlegs and Merida followed quickly, the redhead thoroughly confused.

The Viking gently placed the egg down in the pen out the back and ran back to the door, where the others were. They waited maybe thirty seconds before there was a small explosion. Merida squeaked and hid behind Hiccup, holding onto his shoulders firmly and squeezing her

eyes shut.

>'It's nice to know that, in the face of danger, you'd use me as a human shield,' Hiccup chuckled, and Merida peeked over his shoulder.
'Shut up,' she muttered, standing away from him and waving the dirt out of her face.

Hiccup laughed as he approached the space where the egg had been sitting.

>'Merida, come look at this,'<p>

xXx

__~Hiccup~__

The look on her face said it all. Awe and surprise and love, it was all there. It made his heart skip a beat. Cradled in his hand was a baby Terrible Terror. It was male, with dull black scales and blue highlights on his spine and wings. He was breathing heavily, and had curled up to keep himself warm.

'He hatched too early...' Fishlegs commented.

>'...oh,' Merida's face fell, and she reached out to touch him, but Hiccup pulled him back.
'He needs a bit of time yet. We have to keep him warm while his scales harden and he works out what's going on'

He immediately felt bad as her face fell, and he took her hand with his free hand.

>'C'mon. He'll be okay,' he assured her, taking her back inside, with the baby Terror in his cupped hand, held against his stomach. He and Merida watched as Fishlegs made a nest of blankets for the dragon, and then Hiccup gently placed the dragon inside. It breathed a little puff of smoke from it's nostrils, and snuggled into the blankets.<p>

'Will it live?' Merida asked, and Hiccup exchanged a glance with Fishlegs.

>'We've saved premature dragons before, but there's a high chance that he might now make it. The next few hours will be pretty important,' Fishlegs told her.
'Then I'll help! What can I do? I don't want the wee thing to die...' she said, sitting down in the chair beside the nest.

'You and I can't really do much at the moment. Fishlegs knows what he's doing, so how about you and I go get some fresh air, and we'll come back in a few hours and check up on him, okay?'

Hiccup put an arm around Merida's shoulders and walked her out of Fishlegs' hut. Toothless was waiting impatiently outside, and he wiggled his haunches in excitement.

>'You know... I promised Toothless we'd fly today. Do you wanna come with?
Merida perked up instantly.

>'Yes! Yes please! I'll go and put on the clothes Ruffnut gave me!' she declared, and took off towards his house.<p>

As he was saddling up Toothless, Astrid approached them.

>'Who's the redhead?' she asked, and Hiccup smiled a greeting at her.
'Her name's Merida. She visits around here every few days. She loves the dragons,' he told her, standing up.

>'Yeah, right. The dragons,' Astrid replied, shifting her weight to

her back leg.<p>

'What's that supposed to mean?' he asked, standing up straight.

>'You can't see she likes you, you big dummy?' she replied, and Hiccup stared at her blankly. 'You're aware that you're actually a really nice, good looking, clever guy, right? I mean...girls like you. It happens a lot-'
>'It does?'

>'-only this time you can't afford to fall for her too because you are *already* betrothed to someone else*>*,' Astrid continued, as though he hadn't said anything at all.

Hiccup shook his head.

>'Astrid... Merida is just my friend, okay? And you don't have to remind me about the betrothal...thing. It's always on my mind, alright?'
>'I'm sorry. I just don't want you falling for someone else and then realising you can't have her. Because it's a really sucky feeling,' she finished, and he nodded, understanding her point.

'Thankyou, but... Merida is just a friend. I'm taking her for a ride, so...we'll be back soon, yeah?'

Merida chose that moment to come back in her dragon riding gear. She grinned at him.

>'Lets go!'
<p>

xXx

Hiccup was always most comfortable in the saddle. Merida, however, was terrified and excited at the same time. He could feel it as she sat down behind him.

>'Okay, now... this is probably gonna be really scary. But once you get over that, it's amazing. And I promise you, Merida, that I won't let you fall okay?'
>She nodded, hugging him tightly around the waist.

'Okay Toothless... nice and slow...'

>Hiccup was fully aware of the fact that Toothless had no intention of going 'nice and slow'. But he needed to calm Merida down - he couldn't breathe.<p>

Toothless took a run at the cliff and jumped off the ledge. Then they fell. Merida held him tightly, her face buried in his shoulder. But she didn't scream.

Just as they neared the rocks, Hiccup changed the direction of the dragons tail, and Toothless opened his wings. They immediately filled with air, and they skimmed across the rough sea. Merida chanced a peek and her grip on him began to loosen a little.

>'Touch it,' Hiccup told her, and she hesitantly reached out her arm. Toothless turned his body on the angle so she could brush the surface of the water with her fingertips.<p>

It sprayed up and caught them both, making her laugh. Toothless beat his wings, and they traveled higher, back up over the cliff face and then over the village of Berk. A few of the Vikings waved up at them, and Merida waved back.

>'This is incredible, Hiccup!' she called, and Hiccup smiled back at her.
'Wanna go faster?'

>'Yes!'
>'Higher?'

>'Yes!' she cried, and Hiccup instructed Toothless to fly as high as the clouds. They grew damp flying through them, and a whole world with a fluffy floor was spread out for them. Merida gasped in awe.

'Oh my god... Hiccup...' She let go of his waist and lifted her arms above her head. Hiccup patted Toothless on the neck and Merida laughed loudly.

>'Isn't this great?'
>'Oh, I wish I could spend the rest of my life up here,' she told him, her arms snaking around his waist again as Toothless dipped into a dive back through the clouds.

>'It's pretty fantastic,' he agreed. 'I know we haven't been up here long, but do you want to go see the Terror? He should be getting a little livelier now...'
>'Okay,' Merida replied. She seemed perfectly content. Hiccup considered what Astrid had said - could Merida actually like him like that? He was suddenly aware of how closely she was holding herself to him, her hands entwined together over his navel, her wild curls tickling his neck.

Toothless landed lightly outside the dragon arena, and Hiccup unlatched his prosthetic before expertly sliding off. He held out a hand and Merida took it, her legs almost giving way as she stood on solid ground.

>'You alright?' he asked, and she grinned up at him.
>'Yeah. Just give me a moment, and we can go see the baby dragon,' she told him, and Hiccup nodded.

xXx

A/N

I don't know what happened here.

>Like, I actually don't.

**All I know is that if I didn't stop here, it would have taken me another few days to write and post and edit, and it's just not worth the hassle. **

>But yeah, this chapter totally ran away from me. It is now a double chapter. A present from me to you. I suppose it means I can delay the MacGuffin chapter for a bit too. Anyway.

**FUN FACT: My regular beta, Suzette's Blue, currently dying from a head cold right now, and is of no use to me whatsoever. So I must thank Rowan Kline for beta-ing for me. This chapter goes out to my darling Suzette, because she is lovely and needs to get better. Also, fun fact part two, this was another difficult chapter. I hope you enjoy. **

Review please, my darlings. It makes me ever so happy.

>Stay Shiny

>x Maury

8. Focus, Hiccup!

**Chase the Wind

>Chapter Eight; Focus, Hiccup!**

~Merida~

Fishlegs' hut smelled like fish. To Hiccup, this was perfectly normal, but Merida wrinkled her nose in disgust at the stench. Fishlegs himself was cutting up a freshly caught salmon, dicing it into little pieces. He looked up at them.

'You can go and look at him now. It's been a few hours, so he's awake, and his scales have gone hard, so you can play with him too. Then I'll bring this in and we can feed him!'

Merida pushed past Hiccup and opened the door to the room where the dragon was. It was chewing on one of the blankets, with the remains of another one strewn across the room. It paused in its destruction to look at the newcomers curiously with bright eyes, decided that they were uninteresting and went back to destroying its makeshift nest.

'Mother dragons usually use stone or sticks to make their nests. That way when the hatchlings get restless, the nest can be easily fixed,' Hiccup told her, gently lifting the Terror out of its blankets. It squeaked in protest, digging his claws into Hiccups skin.

'He's so little...' Merida smiled, gently petting him on the head with a single forefinger. The dragon snapped at her hand playfully.

'Well, he's a Terrible Terror. They only grow about as big as a cat. But they're very sweet dragons, if a little mischievous. Here, you wanna hold him?'

Merida nodded nervously, and she sat down in the chair and held out her hands. Hiccup coaxed the squeaking dragon to unhook his claws from his vest, then put him gently in Merida's hands. She grinned up at Hiccup as the dragon unfurled its wings, clearly not happy being manhandled.

'He's so cute...' she said softly, stroking the soft spines on his back. The dragon stopped its whining, suddenly happy with all the attention. It let out a little purring sound, and Hiccup grinned at her.

'You're a natural. He loves you,' Fishlegs told her, bringing in a bowl filled with cut up fish.

The dragon was suddenly not interested in being petted, at the smell of food. It started up its squeaking and struggling, and Merida struggled to keep him from running away. She was grateful for the thick leather and padding of her riding gear, because the dragons claws would have torn through her woollen hunting gown.

'Hiccup, help,' she muttered, grabbing the dragon around the middle.

Hiccup picked up a cube of fish and held it out on his flat hand. The Terror snapped it up, his whole body relaxing instantly. Merida let him go, and he sat quietly on her lap, licking his chops as Hiccup held another piece of fish out. Merida watched as the dragon snapped that up too. This continued on until all the fish was gone, and the baby dragon began to get restless again, leaping up onto the table

and sticking his face in the empty bowl.

'Little Fafnir, you greedy mite,' she smiled, picking him up again and putting him on her lap.

'Fafnir?' Hiccup asked, and Merida shrugged.

'There's a story that I remember my mother used to tell me about a greedy dwarf named Fafnir. He was so greedy that he was turned into a dragon and forced to spend the rest of his life guarding his treasure from thieves. It's also the only dragon name I know...'

'You know, if you've named him, he's your dragon,' Hiccup told her, and Merida's face lit up.

'Really!?' she said, standing up suddenly. Fafnir squeaked in protest, hanging on to her riding vest desperately. Merida helped him up onto her shoulder before giving Hiccup a tight hug.

'Oh, thank you so much! Thank you, thank you!' She then hugged Fishlegs, who hugged her back tightly.

xXx

~Hiccup~

'Are you completely out of your mind?' Astrid asked, leaning on the doorframe. Hiccup was adding more wood to his fire, with Toothless curled up beside him.

'What have I done now?' he replied, standing up.

'You gave her a dragon! And Fishlegs is taking her through the dragon manual as we speak! Do we just trust every stranger who walks in here now?'

'Merida is a good friend, and I do trust her. Besides, Fafnir loves her. I don't think we could have pried him away,'

Astrid snorted at the name.

>'What do you think her Clan will do when she goes home with a dragon on her shoulder? You need to think these things through. I don't care what feelings you have for the girl, you need to stop and think about what would happen if you turned down the princess' hand for a common girl. Great start to a new life here. The king would have our heads!'

'Astrid, stop it,' Hiccup snapped. 'You're not my mother, so stop telling me what I can and can't do. I trust Merida, isn't my trust enough for you?'

Astrid scowled, and left the house, leaving Hiccup with his thoughts and his dragon.

xXx

Hiccup woke up the next morning to someone rapping on his door. He shuffled out of bed, his prosthetic squeaking with every other step. Merida's bright smile greeted him at the door.

'Are you always this cheerful in the morning, or is today a special occasion?' he yawned, standing back to let her in.

'Most mornings,' she replied, waltzing in and petting Toothless on the head affectionately. Fafnir was sitting on her shoulder, taking in his surroundings.

'I have to go to the next Clan today, as you know, but I was thinking, and it might not be a good idea to take Fafnir to the clans. Can you look after him for a few days while I'm there? I don't want him being taken away from me...'

'Yeah, course. He's still a little on the small side, so we'll just keep an eye on him.'

Merida thanked him and sat down at the table. The little dragon crawled down her arm and started playing with a wooden spoon.

'I don't think Astrid likes me,' she said suddenly, taking Hiccup by surprise. He sat down opposite her, and Toothless sniffed at the new hatchling, making Fafnir curiously sidle up to the Nightfury.

'What makes you say that?'

'I don't know. She looks at me like I'm poisonous.'

'Don't worry about Astrid. She can be cold, but she can also be a fiercely loyal friend,' Hiccup told her. Merida didn't look convinced. She just stroked her dragon, who purred at the attention.

'I guess I should go, huh?' Merida asked, after several minutes of the two of them watching Fafnir tease Toothless.

'No... you don't have to go...' Hiccup told her, almost reaching out to take her hand, but changing direction last minute and stroking Fafnir instead. The dragon turned around and snapped playfully at his fingers.

'I should. I just want to get these visits over and done with so I can just... have my time...' she muttered, and Hiccup sighed, disappointed.

He walked her out to where Angus had already been saddled. The horse sniffed at Fafnir curiously, and the hatchling sniffed back, having never met a horse before. Merida handed the dragon to Hiccup before jumping up into the saddle.

>'Well... I'll see you around, I guess,' she told him, and Hiccup nodded in reply.<p>

'You know, Merida... you're always welcome here. Astrid will cool off eventually, and I'm sure you'll get along. I really- well, we all really like having you here...'

'Especially me, though,' Snotlout called, passing on Hookfang. He gave the redhead a flirty wink, and Hiccup scowled at him.

'Thanks,' Merida said softly with a smile. 'I'll see you when I see you, Hiccup...'

'Yeah. Bye Merida,' he replied. Fafnir let out a soft keening noise as the horse galloped away from the Viking village, and Hiccup patted him on the head. 'Yeah, buddy, I know...'

xXx

~Merida~

Angus was exhausted by the time they got to Clan MacGuffin, and they were both soaked by the random torrential downpour that had started up maybe an hour ago. She was grateful that she'd left her poetry book with the Vikings, just in case. She was welcomed warmly by Lord and Lady MacGuffin, and whisked upstairs by Lady MacGuffin in an instant. Her name was Heather, and she gave Merida a pretty white gown to wear while her own clothes dried.

'Thankyou...I don't mean to be a burden,' Merida had said, trying to dry her hair without knotting it too much.

'Not at all, would you like some help with that?' Heather asked, and Merida sat down and let Heather dry her hair. She chattered on about how she'd always wanted a daughter to dress up and have girl time with, but had only been given sons - not that she didn't love her sons.

'Where is Young MacGuffin?' Merida asked curiously, admiring the braid Heather had managed to work her hair into.

'Colin? Oh, he's probably in the kitchens. He likes learning how the maids prepare everything. Quite a good cook, that young man, '

Something about her tone made Merida suspect that she wasn't being told the full story.

'If you don't mind, I might go down there now and just...introduce myself.'

xXx

Merida pushed open the door to the kitchens, and her jaw dropped open in shock. There was Colin, as his mother had said, but he wasn't helping prepare food. He had locked lips with one of the maids.

xXx

~ Stoick ~

Stoick had never really thought about it, but he had currently decided that it was pure dumb luck his son had turned out so well, considering the circumstances. His mother had died early on, and Stoick didn't know anything about childcare. And as Hiccup had grown older, they hadn't been able to talk as freely as father and son should. But now he was sitting opposite Hiccup, and he looked wrecked.

'Dad, I don't think I can just...marry someone I don't know...' he muttered. Stoick sighed.

'I know...and I'm sorry, Hiccup. I didn't want this to happen...'

'She's a princess...she's probably some snotty lady who wears...poofy dresses and corsets, doesn't ride or shoot or dance or put more than one pea in her mouth at a time. I'm not the most traditional viking, but I'm no Scottish king...dad,' Hiccup growled in frustration, standing up and rubbing the back of his neck.

'...is this about Merida?' Stoick asked. Hiccup started, then looked up at him, thinking.

'...yeah dad. I think it might be,'

xXx

**A/N

>**I know, I suck.

>There's just been loads of shite happening recently, and I haven't had any motivation but that's okay because I was on tumblr and I saw a gifset that was...pretty much this fic and felt insanely guilty, and I really hope you can all forgive me.

**FUN FACT: Rowan Kline, a dear friend of mine, shares a birthday with me, which is in about ten days. So this chapter is for him. Love you little brother. **

Also; if you wanna see a drawing of Fafnir and Merida by the ever-lovely IntergalacticKoala, link is in my profile. It's totally worth looking at because I think it's adorable.

>Sorry again, I'll try and get motivated.

>Stay Shiny, and thankyou for being patient with me

>x Maury

9. Forbidden Friendship

**Chase the Wind

>Chapter Nine; Forbidden Friendship**

~ Merida ~

Before Merida could say anything, the maid had disappeared through another door, her face bright red. Colin gave her an awkward look, then walked over to her.

'I don't-'

'Wait... before you say anything... can I just explain?' Colin pleaded, cutting her off. She nodded, and he took her hand, leading her up several flights of stairs and into a tiny drawing room with an armchair, side table and a bookcase jammed inside. Colin gestured for her to sit on the chair, which she did, and he stood opposite her. They were silent for a moment, before he took a deep breath and told her.

'Princess Merida...I'm sorry, but...I can't marry you.'

Merida raised an eyebrow in surprise. 'Why not?'

'Because there's another girl that I'm in love with. And I understand that if you choose to marry me, that I have no choice but to accept, but I will always love her, and there isn't a thing in the world that would change that.'

It sounded rehearsed, Merida could hear that. It was as if he'd been playing the conversation over and over in his mind, in preparation for meeting her, but he hadn't expected to be caught out. Her heart went out to him; she herself had wanted the choice to choose love. She'd received her wish, in a botched kind of way, but he could have exactly what he wanted. Who was she to deny someone love?

She realised that, while she had been thinking, he had stopped talking and looked incredibly nervous.

'Okay,' she said, and confusion crossed his features.

'I'm sorry?' he asked, and she stood, her gown falling to the floor.

'I won't ask you to marry me. I know that if it were me in that position, I would want the Prince to leave me be. So, as long as I get an invitation to your wedding, please, by all means, don't worry about anything, alright?'

Colin looked both surprised and thrilled, all at once. She giggled as he started a long line of thank-yous and gave her a hug.

'...please excuse me, princess, but...I need to go tell Bonnie... she'll be so happy...'

xXx

Merida could almost feel the happiness radiating from Colin as they sat at the dining table at dinner. His family could feel it too, and could only assume that he had had a very successful day wooing the princess. But Merida could also see the spring in Bonnie's step as she moved around the table, topping up drinks and serving different dishes that had been made in her honour. Merida happily chatted with Heather, who was younger than her own mother, and much easier to talk to.

When she retired to her bedroom, Merida couldn't help but think about her little Fafnir, what he was doing and if he was okay. He had curled up beside her and purred as he fell asleep, like a scaly cat with leathery wings and twice as warm, considering the fire in his belly. She crawled into bed, reading all the notes Fishlegs had written her instead, studying them intensely. She jumped at a knock on the door, and smiled simply when Bonnie poked her head in.

'Do you mind if I come in?' she asked, and Merida sat up, gesturing for her to sit on the bed. 'I just wanted to thank you for what you did for us... me and Colin... it means a lot,'

'It's alright. I want to marry for love as well, and it's not fair of me to ruin a perfectly good relationship. And when you're Lady MacGuffin one day, you'll have to come and stay at the castle,' the redhead replied. Bonnie gave her a small smile, face going red. She

was a pretty girl, with pale brown wispy hair, and warm brown eyes.

'Do you have any idea who you will choose... if that's not too bold to ask...?' she asked, and Merida shrugged, her curls falling in her face.

'I really don't know. Both the boys are so nice and would make a good husband... but I don't think I love them...' she replied. Bonnie gave her an apologetic smile, as if she didn't envy the decision at all (and why should she?), and excused herself for bed. Merida sighed. What was she going to do for the next two days if Colin wasn't going to try to please her? She could be with the Vikings right now, playing with Fafnir and talking with Hiccup. Merida snuggled down into the thick blankets and eventually fell asleep.

xXx

'Have we done something offend, Princess?' asked Lord MacGuffin, as Merida packed her things into Angus' saddlebags. Lord and Lady MacGuffin had been trying to stop her from leaving for an hour now, while Colin just stood back and watched with a blank expression.

'No, no... of course not. I just...' Merida had been up all night thinking of an excuse to leave. It's not that they had offended her, she just didn't see the point in staying if Colin wasn't trying to win her affections.

'Please, if we've done something wrong, my lady, please let us make up for it...' Lady MacGuffin pleaded, taking Merida's hand.

'No, not at all. I've had a wonderful time, I really have... I just... I haven't been home in so long, and...'

'Oh, you poor thing. Homesickness... of course, go home and see your family,' the woman said, giving her a gentle hug. Merida gave her a weak smile.

'And please... to make up for the days Colin lost... feel free to come to the castle a little earlier than the other Clans...' she offered, lifting herself up onto Angus' back.

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

Hiccup was miserable.

He was sitting at Fishlegs' wooden table with Fafnir curled up on his lap, full of fish. Toothless lay on the floor beside them, in front of the fire, also full of fish. He had explained his problem to Fishlegs, who was cutting up bread.

'I knew that from the moment you brought her in here. She's lovely, and she fits right in with all us Vikings,'

Hiccup's face fell into his hands, and he groaned. 'I can't marry someone I don't know when I have feelings for someone else.'

'So tell your dad you can't do it. Tell him to send Snotlout instead,' Fishlegs suggested, which coaxed a smile from Hiccup.

'Can you imagine Snotlout as king? Scotland would burn faster than Hookfang in a temper...' he grinned, and Fishlegs chuckled along with him. Hiccup and Fishlegs had become fast friends in recent years, due to their mutual love of dragons. It was a friendship he treasured. Toothless burped, and woke up Fafnir, who climbed down and began to pounce on his tail. Toothless hissed a warning, but allowed the smaller dragon to keep playing.

'She'll be back here in a few days to pick up Fafnir before she goes home... I'll think about talking to her then, but I think it's probably best if I don't say anything until after the Games, after the princess has made her decision.'

'Have you done any training for the Games yet?' Fishlegs asked, and Hiccup raised an eyebrow. 'I'm assuming you'll have to compete...'

Hiccup groaned. Things were going from bad to worse very, very quickly.

xXx

Snotlout looked as if Hiccup had asked him to marry Astrid and become chief all at once.

'You want me... to beat the living snot out of you?' he clarified, shouldering his axe. Hiccup groaned. He knew this was a bad idea, but he wasn't going to ask Astrid.

'No, I want you to help me train for the Games.'

'Yeah but... what if I kill you?'

Hiccup gave him a look, while Fishlegs stifled a snort. Snotlout handed Hiccup a sword, and smirked with amusement as Hiccup struggled to lift it. He threw it down and selected a lighter sword, then took up a fighting stance. Snotlout examined it with a critical eye, and pointed out several apparently major flaws in his stance alone.

Although Snotlout was unbearably arrogant, he was a terrific fighter, and Hiccup could see that he was really trying to teach him. After an hour, Hiccup was bruised and battered (they'd switched to wooden swords because Snotlout was insistent that he could kill Hiccup with one accidental swipe) and no closer to defeating anyone in the Games, unless they incorporated dragon events or maybe drawing.

'This isn't working, Snotlout, but thanks, I guess,' Hiccup muttered, dropping the sword at his side. 'I think I'll just stick to dragon riding.'

'Whatever. I'm sure they don't care if you can swing a sword. You've done cooler stuff that overshadows all that...' Snotlout said, picking up the wooden sword and leaning on it. Hiccup stared at him.

'Wow. Was that a compliment I just heard there?'

'Yeah. Don't get used to it, twigbrain... I just like having Hookfang around. He may be as dumb as a post, but he's a good friend...'

With that, Snotlout turned and walked over to one of his regular sparring buddies, picking up a mace with ease as he did so. Hiccup exchanged a look with Fishlegs, and they left the training area together, Toothless trotting along behind them and Fafnir riding on Fishlegs' shoulder.

xXx

Toothless skimmed the surface of the trees, scaring deer and other animals hiding in the trees. Hiccup had needed a flight to help him clear his head. He hadn't taken the dragon out for a long flight in a few days, what with Fafnir taking up a lot of his time. The little dragon was getting more mischievous, although he hadn't bothered trying to fly yet, content to just sit on shoulders or on Toothless' back.

'How're you doin, bud?' Hiccup asked, and the dragon purred in response. They dropped into the trees, and found what used to be a house of some kind. It looked like it'd blown up, with bits of charred wood all over the place that had grown over with weeds. Birds chattered in the trees, and Toothless sniffed around, picking up on a familiar scent. There were the remains of a campfire - the person who had made them was long gone.

Toothless wiggled his haunches in excitement and began to explore, but Hiccup could see there wasn't anything here. He wanted to see the castle or something exciting. He pulled Toothless into the middle of the clearing, climbed on his back and took off. He'd remember this place for next time he needed some privacy.

The Scottish countryside was beautiful, Hiccup couldn't deny that. But the thick clouds were damp and cold, and it started to rain. They circled around, and found themselves following a road through the hills. Toothless gave a happy little growl, and suddenly dropped in height. Underneath them, Angus the horse shrieked in fear and threw his redheaded rider to the ground.

xXx

~ Merida ~

Merida coughed as all the wind was knocked out of her, and gasped as she fell in a puddle of mud. It was cold and thick and she groaned as it was in her hair. She looked up, shielding her eyes from the rain. Angus was dancing about in the mud, and snorted as Toothless landed a little way away. Hiccup dismounted and ran over to her as fast as he could, with his prosthetic getting stuck in the mud.

'Merida? Are you alright?' he asked, lifting her to her feet. Her gown was wrecked, heavy with mud and rain, her hair was plastered to her head and face, and to be honest, she wasn't alright. Her deadline was getting closer and closer, and soon she'd be married. She wound her arms around his neck, and coughed out a sob.

She was vaguely aware of him trying to lift her up, and she shook her head.

'I'm fine... I'm fine... lets just get out of the rain...' she told him, climbing back onto Angus. She met his gaze, and saw worry etched in his face. He looked like a drowned rat, but the idea that he was worried warmed her. It was nice to know he cared.

'I'm fine...really... lets just get out of here...' she said again, and he nodded, climbing back onto Toothless. She encouraged Angus forward, and she followed the dark shadow that was Toothless, flying low to keep an eye on her. By the time the village of Berk came into view, the rain was coming down hard and fast, and Merida was freezing. She slid off Angus, checked her saddlebags (thankfully everything had made it, unscathed.) and followed Hiccup to his house.

xXx

Merida sat on the floor in front of the fire, wrapped in a thick blanket with Toothless curled around her and Fafnir sitting on her lap. Hiccup sat at the table, cleaning the mud off his prosthetic while keeping a wary eye on her.

'Are you alright?' he asked, finally breaking the silence. She gave him a weak smile and pulled the blanket closer around herself.

'I need to tell you something,' she began, and Hiccup came to sit beside her. They were so close, they were touching, and she leaned against him. 'I'm... I'm supposed to be getting married in a few weeks,' she told him in a quiet voice, and she felt his whole body stiffen. '...and I'm really scared, Hiccup. I didn't want an arranged marriage...and they've told me I can choose one of three suitors... and I don't know what to do...'

Her body began to shake as she cried, and Fafnir crawled up her chest to press his nose to her cheek. It made her smile a little, and she petted the little dragon gently. She started as she felt Hiccup's fingertips on her jaw, and he turned her head so she was looking up at him. Then he kissed her.

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

Her lips were cold, but they were soft, and they moved against his with a sweet naivety that told him that he'd probably taken her first kiss. When he pulled away from her, her beautiful blue eyes had filled up with tears and she stared at him, looking horrified.

'You kissed me...' she whispered, lifting her fingers to her lips and tracing them lightly. He nodded in response, and took her hand gently. She wrenched it from his grip and stood up, displacing Fafnir, who squeaked desperately as he clung to the blanket to avoid falling.

'No... no, this wasn't supposed to happen...!'

xXx

A/N:

****Aaaand, I'm back. Two months later. But it's okay, because I am going to finish this fic, it won't go unfinished.****

****So...yes. I just wanted to thank everyone - I cracked over 100 reviews, which is always a wonderful milestone, and I have so many wonderful followers and favorites and I hope I don't displease.****

****FUN FACT;****

**>The highest number of reviews I've ever gotten is 145, and I'm really excited because I think this one is going to top that. Your opinion means the most to me, and when you guys send me messages and stuff it's that that really gets me motivated and whatnot. I love you all, thank you. **

****Big thanks to Suzettes Blue for beta-ing~!**

>Reviews make the world go round.

>Stay Shiny

>x Maury

10. Sticks & Stones

****Chase the Wind****

Chapter Ten; Sticks & Stones****

~ Merida ~

'...no...no this wasn't supposed to happen...' she whimpered, covering her mouth in shock. She pulled the blanket tightly around herself. Hiccup was staring at her, his eyes full of hurt and his hand still half outstretched from where she had pulled away from him. Merida could feel her heart thudding in her chest, and she felt lightheaded - she couldn't breathe. Fafnir squeaked at her, and she held him close.

'Merida... I'm sorry... I didn't think-' Hiccup attempted, trying to find his voice.

'I just told you that I was getting _married_...' she cried, fisting her hair in frustration. 'And then you go and _kiss_ me...'

Hiccup scrambled to his feet, but didn't come any closer. 'Merida... we're in the same boat. My dad set me up for an arranged marriage with a girl I don't even know... but I met you, and I think you're beautiful and funny and determined and clever... and I really like you.'

Merida wiped at tears as his words made her cry. He kept talking, not realising that he really wasn't making this any easier for her. 'We can get on Toothless and leave... we have the whole of Scotland, and then even further... no one's going to go looking for two teenagers... please, Merida... I love you... I've never wanted anything more that I want you...' he pleaded.

The princess shook her head, turning her face away from him. She jumped as she felt his hand on her arm, and met his stunning green eyes.

'Fly away with me... please...' he murmured, pressing his face into her hair. Merida's heart melted, and she allowed herself to lean into his body. He hugged her from behind, and she realised that this was what she wanted; what she'd been looking for with Colin and Ian and William. But she thought of her mother, and her father... her brothers. She couldn't leave them... the boys wouldn't be old enough to take the crown for years... she didn't want her parents to lose the throne. And if she walked out on Ian and William... she couldn't ever come back and face them. She let out another sob, and pulled out of his embrace, as comfortable as she felt there.

'No. I can't do it... I'm sorry... I have duties and responsibilities... and my family...' she told him, her voice shaking. His expression fell again, and she swallowed the urge to burst into tears again. 'I wasn't supposed to fall in love with you Hiccup. But I have... and I think I'm going to go home tomorrow morning... so that I don't hurt you anymore, okay?'

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

Hiccup stood holding Angus while Merida readjusted all her saddlebags. It was too early for most of the Vikings to even be awake, but Hiccup hadn't been able to sleep and he'd decided to see Merida off, despite how badly he'd stuffed up their relationship. She lifted herself onto the horse with incredible ease, and Angus pranced a bit as Fafnir squeaked.

'Here. You probably don't want me taking him away from people who can care for him properly...' she said, holding the protesting dragon out for him to take. Hiccup shook his head.

'No, he's yours. He won't shut up unless you're around anyway...'

Merida nodded, and tucked the Terror into a saddlebag stuffed with a thick blanket, just over the one packed with her special copy of the dragon manual Fishlegs had made her. Fafnir poked his head out of the bag, but was otherwise content. He squeaked at Toothless, who didn't reply. The Nightfury could feel the sadness between the two friends, and it had affected his mood as well.

'I just wanted to thank you, Hiccup. You've shared so much with me, things about your culture and your stories, and I have a dragon of my own, when only a few weeks ago I didn't even know they existed. And I really hope things turn out okay for you...'

'Yeah,' Hiccup replied, scratching the back of his neck. 'You too.'

Merida gave him a small smile, said goodbye and turned Angus away from the village. They left at a slow walk, and Hiccup would love to believe that she didn't want to leave him, but he knew she was just trying to get Fafnir used to the horses gait, and Angus used to the dragons presence. Once she was gone, Hiccup turned and climbed onto Toothless. The dragon turned and took a running leap off the cliff face that the village of Berk perched on, and they sailed out over the ocean, away from everything and everyone.

xXx

~ Merida ~

Merida had never been so happy to see the castle of Dun Broch. She pushed Angus hard in her eagerness to get home, and she could hear Fafnir screeching in displeasure as he was jostled about. He also hadn't been fed, which meant he'd be extra cranky when he met her family. She pulled the horse up as the dirt road turned to stone, and Angus made a beeline right for the water trough.

She was greeted by one of the head servants, who helped her down and took Angus' reigns immediately.

'Your Highness... you aren't due back for a few weeks...is everything okay?' he asked, and she gave a curt nod.

'Yes, everything is fine. Please, unload Angus, feed him something good, the poor mite deserves it. He'll sleep for a month. Also, have my things brought up to my room, let my mother know I'm here and may I please have something from the kitchen?' Merida asked, putting her hand to her head.

The servant, whose name was Graham, nodded and reached for the first saddlebag. Merida jumped, and unclipped that particular bag. Fafnir squeaked inside, and Graham gave her a curious look.

'...thank you, Graham...that will be all.'

Merida made her way through the castle with Fafnir cradled to her chest. Once she reached her room, she let the dragon out of the bag and let him curiously explore the bed. He seemed to find the blankets very amusing.

She looked up at a knock on the door, and opened it just a little, to see who was there.

'Merida? Are you alright?' Elinor asked, and Merida stepped back to let her in. She sat down on the bed, and Fafnir sniffed curiously at her sleeve, making the Queen jump away in fright.

'Don't scare him...!' Merida cried, darting forward and picking up the protesting dragonet. Fafnir dug his claws into her shoulder, opening his wings and hissing furiously.

'What is that?' Elinor asked.

'This is Fafnir. Mum, I need you not to panic, but there are Vikings living on the coast-'

'We know... they came and asked permission, but they were also riding dangerous dragons, so we couldn't really decline. So you've spent time with the Vikings, then?' she asked, and she sat herself down again, tentatively though, as Fafnir was still flapping about.

'Yes. I spent a fair bit of time with them, actually. Fafnir hatched while I was there, and he took a liking to me. So he's mine now. Don't fret, he won't be any bigger than a cat. Not like the riding dragons.'

'Yes. The chief had a particularly nasty looking one...'

'Thornado?' Merida asked, smiling fondly, but sadly. 'He's nothing but a big sweetheart. Stoick adores him...'

There was another knock at the door, and Elinor opened it to find Graham with her bags and a plate of food. Merida realised just how hungry she was. The servants left her things, and the plate, and soon she was alone with her mother again. She tore into a fresh piece of bread with smooth butter, and she hand-fed Fafnir the slices of roast beef. She would need to alert the staff to the fact that he needed fresh meat every day.

'Okay, Merida... I think you have some explaining to do,' Elinor gestured for her to sit down beside her. Merida finished her meal, and sat down beside her mother while Fafnir sniffed and licked the plate clean.

Merida began the story with meeting Hiccup, and she told her mother everything. By the end of it, she had her head in her mothers lap and was sobbing. Fafnir was snuggling in against her stomach, aware that his friend was upset. Elinor gently tried to soothe her daughter, stroking her hair and whispering quietly.

'And... I saw Colin...um, Young MacGuffin...and he's in love with this girl, and it's so wonderful. And then Hiccup... he told me he loved me...and I had to leave him, mum. I wanted so much to stay with him and I couldn't, and I still don't know who I'm going to choose... I'm going to break a heart either way and I still won't be happy because I think I love him too...'

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

It was nearly dark when Toothless came to land in the village. Stoick was waiting for him, and Hiccup realised with a sinking feeling that he would have to explain himself, and therefore the events of earlier that day. He'd done a good job ignoring his problems all day, running Toothless through aerial manoeuvres that he made up on the spot. Then they'd fallen and taken a dip in the cool waters of the ocean, and then back to practicing up in the air over the water.

'Where the devil have you been, boy?' Stoick growled. Hiccup petted Toothless on the head as the dragon fell to the ground, exhausted.

'I went flying.'

Stoick glared at him, silently asking him to explain himself.

'Merida left this morning. And she's not coming back...' was all he said. Stoick's face softened as his son brushed past him, followed by his dragon. The chief struggled internally for a moment, then followed Hiccup back to his house.

Hiccup was happy to find a small fire in the hearth, someone had put it together for him for when he got home. Toothless immediately

curled up beside it, and Hiccup fell into a seat. He looked up as his dad came through the door.

'Hiccup... are you... alright?' Stoick asked, sitting opposite him. Hiccup could see that his dad was trying to do the deep and meaningful thing, but he'd never really excelled at that. Neither of them had. Their communication breakthrough started when Stoick had stopped thinking of him as useless - and it had taken a near death experience to get that far.

'I'm fine. Why?'

'Listen... I know that an arranged marriage isn't what you wanted...'

'Damn straight...' Hiccup mumbled, trying to ignore his father by starting a sketch.

'...but sometimes they work out better than you think. My marriage to your mother was an arrangement, and I wouldn't have done anything differently with her. She was a truly beautiful, clever woman, and I did love her...'

Hiccup had never really heard his dad mention his mother before. It was just one of those things they never talked about. She had died when he was barely walking - he always assumed in a dragon attack, but he wasn't entirely sure.

'So, if that princess chooses you to be her husband, Scotland will gain a clever, fair and wise King one day. If she chooses one of the other Lords, well, then you're off the hook and you can come back here and continue your training for when you become chief. Maybe you can continue what you wanted with Merida?'

'I can't,' Hiccup said, genuinely moved by Stoick's attempt to cheer him up. 'She's getting married to someone else this week.'

'Well, us Vikings never really took marriage laws seriously if you wanted to keep her on the side...'

Hiccup looked up, outraged, but the amused light in his father's eyes told him he was only teasing. Stoick examined the half sketch - he'd drawn Merida, despite the fact that it only drove the knife in deeper. Her curls were wild and framed her face cutely. Hiccup knew it didn't do her justice.

'Well, son. Get some sleep. You and that dragon must be spent. Tomorrow, we'll be putting together the group to travel to the castle, and I want your input.'

Hiccup saw his father out, and stomped up the stairs, heavy-footed from exhaustion. Toothless followed, just as tired, but determined not to let his friend fall back down. Hiccup crawled into bed, and the dragon settled on his stone. Toothless fell asleep instantly, but Hiccup stayed awake, thinking. After a while, he picked up his blanket and decided to slip in next to Toothless. The dragon cracked open a single eye sleepily, and lifted his wing in welcome. Hiccup was much warmer, all of a sudden, and he slept much more peacefully.

xXx

~ Merida ~

Merida smiled gently as her mother kissed her lightly on the temple. The moon was high, and she had emptied her heart in the last few hours.

'Now...are you sure that wee beastie will be alright sleeping here with you?' Elinor asked, and Merida nodded. Fafnir had become quite accustomed to the Queen. Now she was just another person who would pet him if he cried. Right now, he was curled up beside Merida, snoring happily.

'Thank you, mother...' Merida mumbled, her eyes drifting shut. Within moments, she was asleep, and Elinor gently shut the door behind her as she left.

xXx

A/N

**Yet another chapter.

>Now, I have a little something I would like to share with all of you. Most of my reviewers are amazing, and really, I love all of you. However, I am NOT okay with one person asking me over and over again to update. This is NOT cool. I'm a second year uni student, I have friends and family and a boyfriend, and I don't spend every waking moment writing this fic. I have promised you that I will finish it, and I will do so in my own time, thankyou. If this continues, I will ban anonymous reviewing.
Now that I got that off my chest...**

FUN FACT: I was asked what I thought about the recent HTTYD2 teaser trailer, and this is me telling you that I FLIPPED OUT. It looks AMAZEFACE. I'm so happy, Hiccup looked awesome, and Toothless does as well and just the quality of the animation is just beautiful. How about you guys? Are you happy with what you saw?

**Thanks to Su for beta-ing!

>Stay Shiny lovelies
x love Maury**

11. Into the Open Air

**A/N: Please read all A/N at the end of the chapter.
Thanks**

Chase the Wind

>Chapter Eleven; Into the Open Air**

_~ Merida ~
>

It had been three weeks since Merida had come home. Three weeks of cramming princessy knowledge into her head in preparation for the Lords and their sons. She hadn't ridden Angus in three weeks â€" not properly. Her bow lay against her bed frame, untouched, unstrung and looking forlorn and lonely. She ached to string it across her back and practice her marksmanship, but she had promised her mother that

she would take this seriously. She would be the queen soon, and apparently men did not take kindly to women who go gallivanting around shooting arrows instead of holding social events and bearing children.

The idea of having actual children made Merida shudder. The idea of her wedding night made Merida shudder. A lot of her duties made her shudder, actually. Or rather, they would if she didn't have to wear the stupid corset every day. Her mother had explained to her that it was an act of decency and that she should stop wearing her training corsets (which were supposed to be for young children, but she wasn't able to twist her torso in a proper one with actual boning).
>The only thing Merida had found solace in was Fafnir. The little dragon reminded her of her friendship with Hiccup, and her last few weeks of freedom. The boy had left a dull ache in her heart, which was partly the reason she was throwing herself into all of this Queen business. It kept her mind off him, and also justified her actions. She couldn't have left him and what they could have had for something that she wasn't going to put 110% into.<p>

She would be the fairest and wisest queen Scotland would ever have, and she would make a fine wife for whichever of the men she chose to become her husband. And she would raise herâ€| ugh, children, with the same love and tenderness as her own parents had raised her with. Merida sucked in a deep breath.

She could do that.

She was in the library â€" a rarely used room in the castle. Fafnir was curled up in his basket (apparently it wasn't ladylike to have a scaly winged lizard on ones lap when studying) snoring happily while she pored over the book of poetry that William had made her. She had never been one for poetry, but this book had become one of her favorites. Not only did it have some of the most famous poems of their time, but also in William's tiny scribble were a few he had written himself.

The large wooden doors opened, and in walked King Fergus. He smiled gently at her, and sat down opposite, patting Fafnir on the head as he did so.

>'How are ye, lass?' he asked with his thick accent. Merida gently closed the book.
'I'm alright. I don't have much time left, and I don't know who I'm going to choose, but I'm alright.'

>'You know, it seems daunting at first. Especially because the fate of this kingdom is riding on your choice-
No pressure, dad.

>'- but you got your mothers brains and my good looks. You really can't go wrong.'<p>

Merida allowed herself a little chuckle. It was incredibly hard to laugh properly in her corset, but her dad always knew how to cheer her up. Fergus gently patted down her curls on one side, smiling fondly.

>'You know, when I was presented with the three suitors for marriage, I almost ran. I didn't want to settle down. Then I married your mother, and she stole my heart. You can grow to love someone, my Merida. It just takes time, and an open heart.'
Fergus kissed her gently on the forehead, and stood up.

'Also, the Lords are coming today so that we can explain the Viking

situation in detail. Your mother wants you bathed and dressed appropriately,'

>'I'm to sit in?' she asked, stunned. Fergus nodded.
'We talked it over, and it has been decided that you and the Lord's sons need to experience this firsthand. I believe your mother is waiting for you,'

Still slightly reeling from this information, Merida got to her feet. She gently put the book under her arm and woke the sleeping dragon with a gentle shake. Fafnir stretched his wings and was lifted to her shoulder, where he settled down instantly. She half-curtsied to her father and left the library, heading up to her tower bedroom.

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

'Much better. You're still a bit shaky, but you've got the idea. Just be really sure about where you want the blade to go â€" it's an extension of your own arm.'

>Hiccup swung the blade at the wooden post they were using as a target. Someone had carved the name 'Alvin' where the face should be, and it had several nasty chunks missing from its sides. The sword embedded itself in the wood, and Snotlout nodded in approval. Hiccup pulled it out with a strong, practiced movement.<p>

He had been training for hours, every day since Merida had left. He would participate in the games, and hopefully make some sort of impression on her. She said she lived in DunBroch, which was where the royal family lived, and where the Games would be held. Perhaps her new husband would be participating. That was his drive â€" beat Merida's stupid husband. Just to say 'so there'. At least, that's what he told himself.

>'You're getting better. Reckon you could have an actual spar?' Snotlout asked. Hiccup wiped his brow.
'With you?' he asked, and Snotlout rolled his eyes.

'No. I'd kill you. Do you mind sparring Astrid? She'll give you a good matchâ€"?'<p>

>Hiccup chewed his lip. He and Astrid hadn't really gotten along since Merida had arrived, but he supposed that he owed it to her to try. He nodded, and
Snotlout called the blonde warrior over. She shouldered her axe and levelled him with a look that actively expressed just how she felt about him.

>'Keep it clean,' Snotlout warned, his eyes hovering over the blonde. He clearly didn't trust her to take it easy on him. She swung her axe, and Hiccup parried.<p>

Not very neatly, but with enough force to make her frown falter in surprise. She swung again, and he blocked it again, this time with more confidence. Then he struck, and she sidestepped it with ease, but he knew that his new found skills with the blade had thrown her off.

>The axe and the sword clashed together time and time again, each fighting hard for lost loves and to keep their pride. They drew a small crowd, including Ruffnut and Tuffnut. Hiccup could feel himself getting tired. His arm ached, and his brow was covered in sweat. Toothless was pacing, worried for his friend. Astrid didn't even seem to be tiring.<p>

She swung the axe at him with enough force to put a severe chip in the blade. It flew out of his hand, and she held the axe to his throat. Hiccup fell back, breathing heavily, absolutely exhausted. Astrid shouldered her axe.

>'Not bad,' she said, not harshly. Hiccup smiled at the praise. Maybe he could salvage their friendship after all.<p>

xXx

~ Merida ~

Her gown was a deep navy blue with gold trim. Her mother had allowed her to wear her hair out, and they had tried for half an hour to make it presentable. It had not behaved, not that either of them were surprised. Merida and Elinor walked together, side by side, to the war room, Fafnir riding on Merida's shoulder. It was a beautiful, lavish room, with thick curtains that blocked out the sun, a round stone table with Fergus' seat backed up against the massive majestic fireplace.

The Lords sat around the table, their sons to their right. They all smiled at her as she came in â€" the Lord's smiles were respectful. Their sons were genuinely happy to see her though, and Merida smiled back warmly. Fergus had a proud smile on his face. His wife and his daughter, both looking so beautiful and regal. He gestured for them to sit on either side of him. Merida found herself beside Ian, who bowed his head slightly in respect. There was something off about the way he was looking at her though, but she couldn't place what it was. Fafnir curled around her shoulders and buried his face in her hair.

>'Welcome, gentlemenâ€| and ladies,' Fergus added for his family's benefit. 'The Vikings have been informed that they are to arrive in three days' time in preparation for the Games-'<p>

Three days? Is that all? Merida didn't realise it was so soon. Time had flownâ€|

'-and the chief has informed me that the dragons are a necessary addition to their team. I would like to know what you all think of this â€" especially you, Merida, considering you have spent time with them.'

>Merida gave a short nod, and Lord Macintosh stood up.
'I think that's ridiculous. We shouldn't have to be around those animals. They're dangerous. How do we know they're not mounting an attack on the Kingdom?' he asked, and the other men nodded in understanding.

>'We'll have the Kings Guard â€" more than usual â€" stationed all around the area. Towers will be full to the brim with our best bowmen to take care of any attack from the air. Princess Merida, is there anything you would like to add?'<p>

Merida thought for a moment.

>'Well, after spending time with the Vikings, I've learned a lot. I don't think they have any ill intentions. Their island was falling apart, and they needed somewhere to stay. If they bring their dragons, there will be someone watching them at all times. The dragons themselves are quite gentle. Some can be intimidating, like theâ€|umâ€| the Timberjack, I think it's called, but they're all very sweet. And there's one boy who, um, is sort of in charge of them. He

won't let anything happen to us,' she explained.<p>

Elinor's expression conveyed her approval for the way her daughter had answered. Dignified, and like a future queen.

'Yes, but if something does happenâ€¦ how do we defend ourselves?'

'It won't!' Merida said firmly, standing up. 'These people are looking for a new home. There are women and children as well as the men. The dragons are as integral to their culture as the Highland Games are to ours.'

'You're just a girl, lass. No offense, but you've not had enough experience to deal with this situation. Leave it to the men to decide how to deal with this, if you please,' Lord Dingwall said, and before Merida could give him a piece of her mind, Elinor stood up.

'Excuse me, Lord Dingwall. Princess Merida is here in order to learn about how these meetings proceed. She has spent time with these people, and knows them well. I'd also like to remind you that I have been at every war meeting since becoming Queen, and that Merida will be doing the same when she marries. As she is your future Queen, you will apologise to her, and listen to her when she speaks from now on. Are we clear?'

Dingwall clearly didn't enjoy being told off by a woman, nevermind his Queen, so his apology to Merida was very forced. She nodded in acknowledgement, then continued on with what she was saying.

'I've spent time with them. And as you can see-' She put Fafnir on the table, and he wandered around sniffing at people and tossing around a few papers. Dingwall recoiled in disgust when the little dragon approached him, and Merida realised that he was genuinely afraid of them. '- the dragons are just animals. They can be tamed, and domesticated. Yes, there is always a risk of something going wrong, but I genuinely feel that the Vikings are well prepared for anything. But if you're still scared Lord Dingwall...' Merida couldn't help but add. Fergus looked smug, while Elinor shot her a warning look.

'I think we can trust Princess Merida,' Ian spoke up. He was patting Fafnir on the nose, making the dragon hum with pleasure. He looked scaly and scary, but he was really just a big softie.

'I will have more of the Kings Guard on standby, just in case, okay Dingwall?' Fergus said, a tiny smirk pulling at his mouth.

'It's not natural. Dealing with the stuff of fairytales. What's next? Fairies and trolls?' Dingwall grumbled.

xXx

It had been decided that the King and Queen would dine with the Lords alone tonight, so Merida was able to have her own meal in a much smaller, rarely used dining room with the Lords sons. They were all happily discussing the Viking situation, and if she were perfectly honest, Merida really enjoyed it. Not only did she enjoy being around people her own age, but she also felt, in a way, very grown up.

They would be having meetings like these for the rest of their lives.

'I'm not looking forward to all of these dragons...' William muttered into his goblet.

'Oh, no, they're wonderful! And the Vikings fly on them and hunt with them, and it's just amazing. I hear they have their own set of events that they're planning on adding to the Games roster. My father was just going over the list of events this morning,' Merida replied excitedly.

'What kind of events would they be?' Colin asked curiously, helping himself to more food.

'No doubt aerial maneuvers and such,' Ian put in. 'Do you think... if the Vikings really became a part of our culture... we would integrate the dragons into our own lives?'

The table fell silent. Merida was reeling. She knew that she would never have a dragon of her own, besides Fafnir and maybe other Terrible Terrors... but if the Viking suitor was made King, he would no doubt have a dragon with him. She could get the dragons to all the Lords... their entire culture could become just like the Vikings. She fell quiet as the men resumed their talking.

So, was she to follow her heart... or do what was best for her country?

The dragons would stop any other land from trying to invade. But to marry the Viking suitor would leave the Lords sons feeling awfully betrayed, especially considering two of them had actual feelings for her.

'Don't you think it would be famous to ride a dragon though?' Ian asked, snapping her from her thoughts.

'It is,' she responded without thinking, and they all looked at her quizzically. 'I, uh...' I flew with the chief... for diplomatic reasons,'

She thought it was a good cover up. A much better story than 'the boy I fell in love with took me on a romantic flight over the ocean'. She didn't think they would be too happy to hear that. She realised they were looking at her, willing her to continue.

'...and?' William said, eyes bright. 'How was it?'

Merida smiled at the memory.

>'It was amazing. I felt weightless... like every worry I had had just been left on the ground. I could run my fingers through the clouds... and... I think I would be very upset if that was the only time I was allowed to fly. It was magical,'<p>

'If I were King... I would ask the Vikings to teach me how to ride a dragon. And we would ride into every battle together and burn our enemies to a crisp...' Ian declared, clearly enthused by the idea. Merida giggled.

'You would like Hookfang. You would like Hookfang very much...'

The young Lords began questioning Merida further about the dragons, and she slipped into a state where she didn't mind what she told them. They were just friends talking. They didn't treat her as inferior because she was a girl, or differently because she was the princess. And as she showed them the few pages of the dragon manual that she owned, she wished that it could just stay that way.

xXx

Merida was preparing herself for bed. Her baggy white nightgown was much more comfortable than her tight corsets and heavy gowns, and she noted with a sigh that she would be betrothed in the next few days. She crawled into her bed, and lay awake. Her mind wandered, as one's mind sometimes does if sleep eludes them. It wandered to the Games, and to the arrival of the Vikings tomorrow. She would be faced with the suitors, and she would have to make her decision.

She wondered vaguely if Hiccup might be there, and if he would say anything to her. Would he be upset with her for lying to him? Or would he be too intimidated by her royal status? Maybe he would just be so happy to see her that he wouldn't care about any of it. Maybe they could have a few more stolen moments together.

Wow... thought Merida with a yawn as she rolled onto her side. I must be really tired.

When the rooster in the courtyard crowed at dawn, Merida sat upright. Her hair was its usual tangled mess, and she had little dark rings under her eyes. She knew she hadn't slept for more than a few patchy hours. With a sigh, she got out of bed and rang for one of her personal maids.

And so started the first day of the rest of her miserable life.

****A/N:****

**>Hey guys. So, obviously there's a new chapter.

**>I hope you like it, because I'm a bit on the fence about it, but that's okay because the next chapter is the presentation of the suitors and the one after that is the Games! Although, depending on my mood, the Games might cover two chapters. I don't know.

**>FUN FACT: I wrote this in Palliative Care, where my nan is suffering from cancer. She doesn't have long, but all she does is sleep, so I really don't have much else to do here. All I'd like to say is that this chapter is for you, Nanny Belv. You've been one of the most supportive people in my life and I'm going to miss you terribly. Thank you, for everything.

**>I would also like to thank Suzette's Blue, not only for being my amazing beta, but for being my rock in this really shitty time. You're an amazing friend, and I'm so glad we both missed that first orientation day for MF. Otherwise we might have never been as close as we are. I hope you enjoy your trip to CHINA (lucky devil).

>As Su will be in China for like, six weeks, I won't have a beta and so nothing will be posted until she gets back. But I need a distraction, so I'll probably write one or two more chapters in that

time.
**

>On that note, I will leave you, dear readers.

>I love you all, and if you could all just do me a favour and hug someone in your family that you might not see that often, or just your mum or dad or sister or something like that. Family needs to stick together, even when the going gets tough.

>Sorry to be preachy.

>
Stay Shiny**

>xx Maury

12. Remember to Smile

Chase the Wind

>Chapter Twelve: Remember to Smile**

**Previously;

>

>When the rooster in the courtyard crowed at dawn, Merida sat upright. Her hair was its usual tangled mess, and she had little dark rings under her eyes. She knew she hadn't slept for more than a few patchy hours. With a sigh, she got out of bed and rang for one of her personal maids.

And so started the first day of the rest of her miserable life.

~ Merida ~

She had been sitting in her bathtub for about half an hour, singing to herself. Her voice, which wasn't all that bad, echoed off the walls and the song she sung was an old one her mother used to sing. Even now, as a young woman, the lyrics would comfort her. Her pale skin had gone blotchy from the heat, and her fingers were pruned, but she didn't mind. Anything to drag the morning out.

A knock at the door ruined any chance of her bath lasting the next five minutes.

'Merida?' Elinor called, poking her head in the room. 'Are you nearly done?'

'Yes mother. I'm getting out now,' the princess called back. Elinor shut the door with a snap, and Merida held her breath as she dunked her entire head under the water.

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

Hiccup, on the other hand, had been awake for hours. He was strapping on 'Toothless' saddle and checking the rig for his tail, to make sure nothing would go wrong. He had prepared the racing saddle/rig as well, as he intended to compete in the dragon events. He wouldn't impress anyone in the normal events, no doubt, but he'd be damned if he'd be beaten in dragon events.

Everyone who passed him said good morning, politely, but he could see the pity in their eyes. He ignored it. He was the Chief's son, and

despite whatever happened today, he would one day run this village. Clan. Whatever.

'How're you feeling?'

Hiccup looked up as Astrid mounted Stormfly, also ready to leave. All around them, Vikings were strapping their axes, swords and hammers to their dragons.

'Alright. There isn't much I can do but give it my best,' Hiccup replied, standing up straight. With a quick hand signal, he instructed Toothless to shake his body like a dog. Nothing flew off, and he patted the dragon on the neck. Everything was secure.

'You'll do great. I'm sure,' Astrid told him, and gave him a gentle, platonic kiss on the cheek. Hiccup thanked her, then mounted his dragon as Stoick came into view, the ever-intimidating Thornado right behind him.

>'Ready, Vikings?' the chief cried. The Vikings gave a mighty cheer, and Stoick nodded. 'That's what I like to hear.' He addressed his son and Astrid directly. 'Do you mind bringing up the rear with Astrid and the twins?'

The three dragons manoeuvred themselves into position, and Hiccup watched as the massive group of dragons took off. A smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. If the Scots didn't take them seriously before, they would be in for a bit of a shock. He urged Toothless into the sky, and they followed the flight of dragons all the way to Dun Broch.

xXx

~ Merida ~

'Mother, please-'

'Merida, I'm trying not to...but do you have any idea just how difficult this is?' Elinor replied, and Merida resisted the urge to roll her eyes. Of course she knew how difficult it was. She'd been doing it her whole life. The princess winced again as Elinor attempted to pull the brush through her tangled curls.

It took them a while, but eventually they had forced her hair under the cap, and she was just having the finishing touches added.

Her gown was a lovely royal blue, with gold embroidery on the hem line. Her cap was white - the same one she wore to her previous presentation. A small gold band held it in place. Draped across her body was the traditional tartan for her Clan. Normally she wouldn't have to wear it, but something about the Viking's presence had made all the clans very 'them and us'.

'Which pin would you like?' Elinor asked, holding up three for her to choose from. She made her selection, one that spiralled, similar to the design on her first bow, and Elinor pinned the tartan in place at her hip. She winced as she pricked herself, and then something caught the Queen's eye.

'Oh, would you look at that?' Elinor said, putting her hand to her cheek. Merida turned, and the two women peered out of the window.

A flight of dragons, large enough to be an invading force, led by Stoick the Vast on his massive blue Thunderdrum. Merida spied Snotlout hanging to Stoick's right on Hookfang. Her stomach dropped. If Snotlout would be competing for her hand, then stuff whatever the alliance would do for her kingdom. There was no way she would marry that cocky jerk.

'It's an impressive force, Merida. Are you sure they're here peacefully?' Elinor asked, and Merida nodded, still scanning the flight. Finally, she saw him at the end. Toothless stuck out like a sore thumb, with his bright red tail fin. Her breath caught in her throat, and she turned away from the window.

'Are you alright?' Her mother asked, and the princess nodded firmly. She could do this.

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

Toothless landed with a soft thump, and barely allowed Hiccup time to climb off before he folded his massive wings. He saw a massive man standing next to his father. The two were similar in size, although this other man happened to be missing a leg. Hiccup found himself admiring the handiwork of his wooden leg - it was primitive, but it had some beautiful carving. The young Viking often wondered about the aesthetics of his own ugly metal prosthetic.

Stoick gestured for Hiccup to join them, and he gave Toothless a gentle nudge. As the two of them approached, Hiccup noticed this other man eyeing him off, like he was for sale or something.

Missing a leg. Not much fat on him. Looks a bit dopey too, while we're at it. Don't you have a better one than this? Or at least lower your asking price.

He stifled a smirk at his own private joke.

'Hiccup, this is King Fergus,' Stoick said in a calm, respectful tone. Hiccup's stomach dropped to his butt for a moment, and in a moment of panic, gave a clumsy bow. He wasn't quite sure how to address the situation.

'Nice to meet you, sir,' Hiccup said, straightening up.

'And you. This is an impressive force, Stoick. Not trying to overthrow me, are you?' Fergus joked, although Hiccup could see that he had also acknowledged the threat. It couldn't be easy for him.

'I assure you, they're harmless. Just check em in a pen. They can get out, but they know that if they're locked up, they should stay locked up. If you have a few spare sheep or cattle, that'll keep em appeased as well,' Stoick said. Hiccup wanted to interject and give his (expert) opinion, but he figured now was not the time to be a know-it-all.

'This is an impressive beast, young Viking,' Fergus said, looking down at Toothless. The dragon was helping out by looking as

intimidating as possible. He stretched out his wings, showing off his immense wingspan. Fergus examined the metal rods running down the dragon's side. 'What's this contraption here?'

'Well, Toothless damaged his tail fin, so he wasn't able to fly. I fixed him a prosthetic, much like yours or mine, sir,' Hiccup added, holding out his foot. He was very proud of his own replacement foot. It was one of his finest creations, especially how it tied in with Toothless' saddle.

'I should very much like to hear that story, but we'll save it for another time. Graham! Please direct the Vikings down to the lower paddocks. They're unused, and the dragons can stay there. If you'll please follow me, Stoick, we have a few things to discuss.'

Stoick nodded, and Hiccup could see just how hurt the Chief's pride was, taking orders from another. However, he had to do what was best for his people. He instructed Hiccup to help move the dragons, and then left, still talking to the King.

xXx

~ Merida ~

The dragons took off once more, and Merida felt her heart clench as she saw Hiccup clearly. He was here, and he would watch her choose one of the suitors. Perhaps she could get him alone and talk to him... explain everything.

'Merida? It's time...' Elinor called gently. 'The Vikings are just heading into the castle now, and the other Clans are ready.'

The princess turned away from the window, and took a deep breath.

'Okay, I'm ready,' Merida said firmly, trying to assure herself of the fact. Elinor crossed the room and kissed her daughter on the head.

'I'm so proud of you,' she said quietly, hugging Merida tightly. 'Nowâ€¦ remember to smile,'

Merida did smile. It was the same thing she had said the last time this scenario played out. Together, the women made their way down to the Throne Room.

xXx

The triplets, who were normally whispering about some scheme, were oddly calm. They were decked out in traditional tartan; each had a small, polished sword hanging from his hip, and Merida could tell that they were being on their best behaviour. Probably because they wanted to see the dragons.

Merida herself sat upright on her seat, hands in her lap. Fafnir was sitting quietly at her feet, and his presence reassured the future Queen. Elinor and Fergus were quietly talking, and the chatter of the Dun Broch clan filled the hall. Guards pulled open the double doors, and the bagpipes started up. She suddenly felt very faint.

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

The Lord's sons were looking at him strangely. They were nothing like he expected, which made him feel a little better, but he still had a ball of nerves in his stomach. Stoick put his hand on his sons shoulder.

'I have something for you,' he said, and he draped a thick cloak over Hiccup's shoulders. It was heavy, part pelt and part hide.

'Wow. Thanks dadâ€¦'

'It's uh, the pelt is yakâ€¦ my first ever yak. I raised him from a little calf until the day he died. And the hide is Gronckle hide - the dragon that took your mother from us. I understand if you don't want it, but I just thoughtâ€¦'

Hiccup pinned the cloak together at his throat. It made him feel much stronger, all of a sudden.

'Thanks dad.'

The doors opened, and the squeal of the bagpipes sounded, and then they were moving.

Stoick led the Vikings into the hall, standing beside the MacGuffin Clan, and Hiccup stood behind his father. He didn't even have a look at the woman who would be judging him, and considering him. He just watched Stoick.

Fergus got to his feet, and held out his arms.

'Welcome, all, to the castle of Dun Broch. Last time we were here, things got a bit muddled, didn't they?' A soft chuckle went through the Scots, and the Queen allowed herself a bashful smile.

'We are joined today by the newest Clan, the Vikings from Berk. I welcome you as well, and hope that you find yourselves happy here. Now, for the presentation of the suitors. Lord Dingwall?'

The man who was Lord Dingwall stepped forward. He was an old man, with wispy white hair and a round middle. His son, a weedy fellow, stepped forward as well, and bowed low to the royal family.

'I present to you, my only son, William. He has a heart of gold, and a sharp mind. He is well versed in history and literature, and has a very impressive talent as a strategist. He would make a fine husband, and a very fine King,' When Dingwall had finished his piece, Hiccup caught a glimpse of William. The young man stood with his head high and proud.

'Clan Macintosh,' Fergus called, waving his hand to Lord Macintosh.

'Your Majesty, I present to you my eldest son. He defended our lands from northern invaders, and is skilled with both sword and bow. He is a natural born leader, and I know that he has the heart of a true warrior.'

Ian stepped forward during his father's speech, and also bowed low to the King and his family. Hiccup could barely see anything, but he could tell that Fergus was impressed. Hiccup felt a hand on his shoulder, and turned to see Astrid give him a reassuring smile.

'You okay?' she whispered, as King Fergus called forward the next Lord.

'I think so. Just a bitâ€¦ you knowâ€¦' Hiccup mumbled back, and Astrid nodded in understanding.

'- strongest in the Clan, and an excellent candidate for the Princess' hand,' finished Lord MacGuffin. Hiccup sighed, and prepared himself, as Stoick stepped forward.

'Your Majesty. I present to you, my only son, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third.'

xXx

~ Merida ~

At this, Merida's head whipped around so quickly that it cracked.
Hiccup?

Her father nodded, willing Stoick to continue, and surely enough, Hiccup stepped forward and gave a stiff, nervous bow.

'He doesn't look like much, at first glance, however he has accomplished more in his own eighteen years than most of the Vikings in our history books. He was the first Viking to tame and ride a dragon, and not just any dragon, but the incredibly deadly Nightfury. Nearly single-handedly, he brought down the Green Death, the largest dragon known to mankind, larger than this castle. In doing so, he not only saved the lives of his entire village, but put his own life on the line. He has a permanent reminder of his heroism in his prosthetic leg, but wouldn't dare boast about it, or take the credit he is due.

'He is the head of the Berk Training Academy, and the leader of the Dragon Flight Club, a defensive group dedicated to the protection of Berk. He has faced Alvin the Treacherous, and Dagur the Deranged and outwitted them with his superior intellect. He has invented several inventions, including his own prosthetic, his dragons tail fin and multiple weapons.'

Hiccup was slowly shrinking in embarrassment, and Merida could hardly keep still. She wanted to run over there and hug him, tell him she was sorry, that everything would be alright. Stoick was right â€" he was far too modest, considering his accomplishments.

'He has created a new version of our Dragon Manual, and is constantly updating it with new information, and together with Fishlegs, he has made several leaps into understanding the physiology of the dragons as well as their behaviours. He is slowly teaching wild dragons to trust in the Vikings, even starting in the setup of a breeding program for some of the rarer animals.

'I know that he's just a Viking, but he is an amazing young man and

we are all _incredibly _proud of him,' Stoick finished with a deep breath and satisfied smile. Hiccup was being stared at by most of the room, and Merida knew that they were trying to work out if Stoick was lying.

Fergus cleared his throat, and addressed the whole room.

'Right. Well, there you have it, the suitors. Princess Merida has her work cut out for her. I suggest you all find your quarters, for tomorrow, the Games begin, and after that, the princess will have her decision.'

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

Hiccup started. He stepped out in front of his father to get a good look at the princess. A mighty grin split his face as she smiled back at him, eyes bright. His thoughts were confirmed by the little dragon curled up at her feet. Stoick put his hand on his son's shoulder.

'Wellâ€¦ would you look at thatâ€¦' he mumbled, and Hiccup couldn't even form words in order to reply.

xXx

Hiccup's room was quite small, but nicely furnished. It had a small bed, and a fireplace, and also a window overlooking the dragon paddock. Several of the Vikings, under the watchful eye of Gobber, were trying to herd sheep into the pen for the dragons dinner.

He was still reeling from the discovery that Merida was the princess of Dun Broch. All that time, and she had never told him. It would have solved so much fretting, but in a way, he was happy that he had received this pleasant surprise. He would have acted differently if he had known, and that's probably why she'd kept it from him. The smile hadn't left his face.

A gentle knock on his door made him jump. He crossed the room and opened it, to find a very shy looking Merida there. She was still in her formal dress, with all of her wild hair pinned under the white cap, but she was still her beautiful self.

'Helloâ€¦ may I come in?' she asked nervously, checking the hallways. Hiccup stepped away from the door and let her in, closing the door shut behind her. Then they just looked at each other. She looked guilty and unsure, like she expected him to yell at her.

'â€¦come here,' he said, closing the space between them and pulling her into a tight hug. He held her even tighter as her shoulders began to shake.

'â€¦are you crying?' he asked.

'No. Yes. I was so worried that you'dâ€¦ you know, hate me,' she said, her voice muffled due to her burying her face in his chest.

'I don't think I could hate you,' Hiccup told her, and she held him tighter.

'I'm so sorry I didn't tell you. I wanted you to treat me like a normal person. And then you went and made me love you and it got all confusing and I was so scared when I saw Toothless. I thought you might be angry with me,' Merida said, pulling away and looking him in the eye. He kissed her gently on the forehead.

'I'm not angry. I am so incredibly happy. Ecstatic. Over the moon,' he said to her, and she laughed, wiping her eyes.

'I have to go, before they catch me' but I just wanted to see you. I'll, um' see you at the Games?'

'Yeah. I'll be the one losing horrifically,' Hiccup assured her, and she darted over and kissed his cheek.

'Okay' bye Hiccup'

And like that, she was gone.

xXx

****A/N:****

****Hey!**

>As you can see, I have posted a new chapter. It is long.

****I would like to thank Rowan Kline, who was my emergency beta, but also Suzette's Blue, who beta'd from FREAKING CHINA. I love her. I love them both.****

****FUN FACT: My nan passed away two days after I posted that last chapter, and all of your kind reviews really helped me out. So I just wanted to thank you all so much. Also, my goodness, I hit 200 reviews! That's amazing guys! I'm so happy that you enjoy this fic. It's now in the top 5 reviewed fics on this site, and that makes me so happy! Have more Mericcupy goodness from me to you.****

****The next chapter is the games. Will Hiccup be surprisingly fantastic or completely dreadful? Stay tuned to find out~****

****Read and Review, my lovelies.**

>It makes me feel so warm and fuzzy.

****Love Maury x****

13. The Games

****Chase the Wind**

>Chapter 13; _**The Games

>__

>~ Ian Macintosh ~
_

Ian stood straight, head held up high and proud. Despite his calm demeanour, he was actually incredibly nervous inside. Even though he was pretty much certain that Princess Merida would choose him to be her betrothed, a little bit of doubt was eating away at the back of his mind.

The Viking lad had a dragon. Not just any dragon either, an impressive looking one. He'd had a bit of a gawk at them all earlier, and he hadn't failed to notice that Toothless (what an anticlimactic name for the 'unholy offspring of lightening and death itself') was the only one of his kind.

He was snapped from his thoughts when the trumpets announced the arrival of the Royal Family. The King rode in first on his massive chestnut stallion, followed by the Princes. Then came Princess Merida and Queen Elinor. His breath caught in his throat when he saw her, and it was almost impossible to fight the grin that lit up his features. He had eyes only for her. And yetâ€¦

She had looked right past him. He looked to his left, following her line of sight, only to find that the Viking was grinning proudly right back at her. He looked back to Merida, and felt jealousy bubble up in his chest as she looked back at Hiccup, all lovey dovey like.

Rage boiled inside him. How could this happen? He had been in love with Merida for years, and the Viking waltzes onto the scene and all of a suddenâ€¦this?

He steeled himself. Today, he would throw himself into the Games. And he would prove to Merida that he was worthy of her hand, and to rule Scotland by her side.

xXx

'I don't get itâ€¦' Hiccup said, as he stared at the caber.

'You have to throw it,' Colin explained, and Ian watched as he stooped low to demonstrate. Hiccup watched, immensely confused. Colin was very skilled with the caber, and Ian was quite envious. He lifted it carefully, supporting it on his entwined fingers and resting the pole in between his neck and his shoulder. He watched as MacGuffin began to run, and just before he hit a rope marker, he gave the caber a mighty toss.

They watched as it soared, turning in the air and hitting the ground with a dull thud. The crowd cheered, and Ian gave a nod of approval. Colin had never needed, or desired his approval, but the recent developments with the Vikings had meant that they, as well as Dingwall, had made them form a new sort of camaraderie.

'Nicely done,' he said quietly, and Colin rolled his shoulders as he examined the fallen caber.

'Soâ€¦ it's not how far you throw it, remember that. It's how straight you threw it,' Colin finished explaining to Hiccup, as if he hadn't just thrown a tree as if it were a sapling.

'Straight?' Hiccup asked, as Ian himself stepped up to compete.

'It has to land directly in front of you. If you imagine it like a clock, and it has to be as close to twelve as you can get itâ€¦' William finished, and Hiccup nodded, not looking particularly happy with the idea.

Ian didn't do as well as Colin â€" he never had been able to best him. William did even worse than that. But when Hiccup stepped up, he could see that it just wasn't going to happen. The boy was a bit weedy, and it didn't help that his fake leg couldn't really grip the ground as well as a decent pair of boots. One of the men standing nearby helped him pick the caber up, and Ian couldn't even hide his amused smile as Hiccup just toppled over backwards with it.

The Viking was surrounded in an instant, both Colin and William bent over to see if he was okay.

>'Are you alright?' they were asking, and Hiccup just lay there, catching his breath. Ian rolled his eyes, and in doing so noticed that the small crowd was parting for someone. Princess Merida, followed by her brothers, leaned over Hiccup, concern on her face.<p>

'Hiccup? Hiccup, are you alright?' she asked, tilting his face so he was looking at her.

'What kind of sport is that? Throwing tree trunks. Honestlyâ€|' he mumbled, and she laughed quietly. Her laughter was echoed by the rest of the crowd. Ian scowled a little as Harris and Hubert helped the Viking to his feetâ€|foot. Whatever.

'Are you sure you're okay?' Merida asked, and Hiccup gave a low, overly dramatic bow.

'Fit as a fiddle,' he replied, and she nodded, smiling happily. Then she turned, albeit reluctantly, and followed her brothers back to the tent where their parents where.

What had happened in those few weeks? Ian thought back to their dinner. She had looked stunning, in the rich, red gown, and they had laughed and talked well into the evening. What had happened between then and now? With a sigh, Ian made his way across the oval, swinging his sword from side to side.

xXx

~ Queen Elinor ~

'Is everything okay?' Elinor asked as Merida flopped down in her chair. The triplets had apparently run off, and she prayed that they weren't out stuffing their faces with cakes and treats. She had a marvellous dinner planned.

'Oh, yes. Hiccup justâ€|couldn't lift the caber. His foot slipped and he fell over,' Merida replied, sitting back quietly. The Queen watched her daughter for a while. She'd been unusually happy all day, watching the Games with bright eyes and the smallest smile she'd ever seen.

'Soâ€| have you any thoughts on who you might choose?' Elinor asked, and Merida tore her eyes from the young Viking to look at her curiously.

'Uhm. I don't know, yet. They're all nice guys,' the Princess replied, and Elinor tilted her head slightly.

'Even the Viking boy?'

'Of course. Hiccup is really sweet and kind. And he's a good friend, and he's so smart,'

'And he's quite good looking, don't you think?' the Queen baited, and Merida's face turned as red as her hair.

'Wellâ€¦ yes. I suppose you could say thatâ€¦' she replied quietly, and went back to watching the Games. But she was pointedly looking away from Hiccup, making Elinor smile knowingly. She watched the boy as he lined up with a few other Vikings to face Clan MacGuffin in the tug of war. She could see his prosthetic slipping around in the mud, but they held their own.

After a mighty heave, the young MacGuffin was dragged over the line, and the Vikings all let go of the rope in their celebration, sending all the Scotsmen backwards, carried by momentum. Elinor allowed herself a small chuckle â€" it was funny, after all.

xXx

~ Astrid ~

Astrid wasn't able to enjoy the Viking victory in the tug of war. She and Ruffnut were standing by the makeshift dragon paddock, both looking as foul as they felt.

Despite their skill and knowledge, they hadn't been allowed to compete. Just because they were _girls._

'These women are ridiculous. They don't do anything except cook and have babiesâ€¦' Ruffnut said, screwing up her face at the idea. They'd all received a few shocked stares at their attire â€" the usual dragonback uniform. A pair of padded pants, a thin tunic and the vest that attached to the saddle, as well as a thick pair of boots, handsome leather gloves and their usual helmets. None of those swishy skirts, because they looked not only ridiculous, but uncomfortable and cumbersome.

'I'll bet that if the Princess had wanted to compete in the archery, she'd have been allowed,' Astrid replied bitterly. Ruffnut laughed.

'Yeah. And she'd win everything. I can't believe she's actually a princess. I thought they were all skirts and curls in their hairâ€¦ and tea parties and manners. Notâ€¦ crazy, arrow shooting, boar hunting badassesâ€¦'

'She's not that great,' Astrid mumbled. 'How do we even know she wasn't playing us this whole time? If the Scottish learn how to train dragons too, they could easily overpower us and get rid of us for good. And we brought most of the trained dragons with us, and I'm pretty sure some of the wild ones followed as well. It's not like there aren't any dragons for them to trainâ€¦'

Ruffnut looked at her with a confused expression.

'But if they just wanted the dragons, then why don't they just ask Hiccup to show them what to do?'

'I don't know. I'm going to find Hiccup. Just to tell him that we should be on our guard.'

xXx

Hiccup was leaning up against one of the tent poles, talking to one of the Scottish about dragons when Astrid found him. He excused himself, and shot her a grateful look.

'Hey. How're you doin?' he asked, and she couldn't help but smile in reply.

'Alright. I'm not allowed to compete, which is stupid. Because you and I both know that I could have kicked all their buttsâ€|' she replied. Hiccup smiled warmly at her.

>'I actually wanted to talk to you about Merida,'<p>

'Princess Merida?' he replied, a hint of excitement creeping into her voice. 'It's a pretty good turn of luck, don't you think?'

'Yeah. That's what I wanted to talk to you aboutâ€|' Astrid sucked in a deep breath, knowing that he wasn't going to appreciate her argument one bit. But if she could at least put the idea in his headâ€|

'Aren't you even a little bit worried about how convenient this all was?' she asked, and he narrowed his eyes.

'What do you mean?'

'Wellâ€| she was there when you landed, right? And then she got in really close with you, and I just don't want you get hurt,'

Hiccup's expression became confused.

>'Why would Merida hurt me?'<p>

'Wellâ€| I just thought that maybe she was only interested in you for personal gain. I meanâ€| you are the greatest dragon trainer we've ever had. And I'm sure the Scottish could really benefit from being on dragonback. I don't want her to take advantage of the fact that you have genuine feelings for herâ€|' Astrid was beginning to regret this already.

'â€|what? Why would you even think that?' Hiccup asked with a frown. 'You don't think that Merida likes me at all? Am I just that much of a dork?'

'No, no of course that isn't what I meant,'

'Then why? Merida had no idea I was in line to be chief, and I had no idea she was royal. We were just two people who got along really well, and you're just being jealous!'

'I beg your pardon?' Astrid saw red. 'What the hell? I loved you for years, Hiccup, so firstly how dare you even ask if someone could like you. And secondly, I'm just trying to look out for what we've got. I don't want people who don't know anything about dragons to suddenly have dragons and not know what they're doing!'

She could tell that Hiccup was fuming. He was pulling that face that

she had become very familiar with in the last few months of their relationship.

'Hiccup, please. Just be careful, okay?' she pleaded, and Hiccup closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose, obviously trying to not blow up at her. Then he turned and left without a word. Astrid sighed, and she could feel the sting of tears in the back of her eyes.

She forced them down, took a deep breath, and headed back to Ruffnut feeling slightly deflated.

xXx

~ Ian Macintosh ~

Ian gave a stiff bow, and straightened up again.

>'Your Majesty, I was wondering if Princess Merida would care for a walk around the grounds?'<p>

She got to her feet eagerly enough, and Ian held out his arm, which she took happily. They skirted around the grounds, occasionally stopping to watch some event in the Games.

'So, Princessâ€|have you come any closer to making your choice?' Ian asked, and her face went ever so slightly crimson. It was endearing, he decided.

'Oh, um. No, not reallyâ€|' she replied, and before Ian could ask her anything else, she had grabbed his hand and dragged him somewhere else.

'Hi Merida!' She had pulled them towards one of the Vikings, whose dragon was happily munching onâ€|rocks?

'Hey Fishlegsâ€| hello Meatlug,' she crooned, scratching the dragon on the head. Ian stayed well back, still not overly comfortable around the massive beasts.

>'Fishlegs, this is Ian Macintosh, a good friend of mine. I thought I'd introduce him to Meatlug, because he's never seen a dragon beforeâ€|'<p>

Ian recalled with horror the dinner conversation from a few nights beforehand.

>Would it not be famous to ride a dragon?

He'd meant it at the time, but looking at the beast before him, he wasn't all that fond of the idea.

'That's okay, thanks. I'll just stay here,' he called out, and the Viking named Fishlegs laughed.

'She's harmless. Come and give her a pat,' he said, and Merida stroked her side, completely unafraid. Ian knew that if he didn't, it would make him seem like he was scared of the dragons. And so, he sucked in a deep breath and joined the two of them, tentatively resting a hand on the dragon's leathery hide.

He was surprised to find that it was incredibly warm to the touch, and that the purring noise that she was making reverberated through

her entire body. He felt his fear melt away instantly and gently petted the dragon, who seemed to enjoy it immensely.

'Huhâ€¦ this is actually kinda cool,' he murmured, and Merida's face lit up.

'They're amazing! You should talk to Hiccup about them, because he knows pretty much everything there is to know about dragons!'

Ian really didn't want to talk to Hiccup about dragons, so instead, he took her hand and led her away from Fishlegs, every intention of steering her mind clear of anything even remotely Viking-related.

'So, Princess. I've been meaning to talk to youâ€¦ about, uh. You know. The whole suitor thingâ€¦' he ventured, and she nodded, but didn't meet his gaze. He took it as a sign to continue.
>'I just wanted to make sure that you were really thinking things through. Everyone has their pros and cons. Like William. Sure, he's a nice ladâ€¦ but will he be a good king? Andâ€¦and Colin, I'm pretty sure he has a tendency to beâ€¦ uh, frivolous with the maidsâ€¦ and don't even get me started on the Vikingâ€¦'

'Hiccup,' she said, and he was surprised at the venom in her voice. 'His name is Hiccup, and he's a perfect gentleman. And as for William, he's clever, and genuine and just downright lovely. He'd make a fine king. And anything you've heard about Colin is complete and utter nonsense, and I ask you to dismiss them all without a second thought.'

'I-I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offendâ€¦' Ian stuttered, and Merida took a deep breath through her nose.

'No, you just meant to make yourself seem like the obvious choice. But you're not, Ian. You're wonderful, but you've got flaws of your own. You're vain and self-centred and I don't know if you'd make a good _husband_, never mind king.'

Ian recoiled at the harsh words, and watched with horror as Merida stormed away from him. There was a horrible sinking feeling in his stomach, and he was pretty sure he'd royally stuffed up any chances he had to make Merida even consider him.

xXx

~ Queen Elinor ~

Elinor could immediately tell that Merida was in a foul mood when she returned from her walk without Macintosh.

'Is everything alright?' she asked, and Merida made a groaning noise.

'Boys are stupid,' she growled, and Elinor smiled knowingly.

'Yes, my dear. They're incredibly stupid. But you grow to love themâ€¦' she said, looking over to her husband, who was currently standing with Stoick, the two of them talking and watching the sky.

It was a bright, clear day. Beautiful, just perfect for a dragon flight demonstration. Elinor and Merida joined the King and the Viking, and they watched the skies, Merida with a lot more excitement on her face.

'Here they come,' Stoick said, gesturing, and the crowd ooh'd and aah'd as three dragons with riders swung in perfect formation around the castle's main tower and headed straight to the field. The one at the point of the formation, a blue dragon with spines on its head and tail, dropped a few feet away from the others, and did a low sweep of the field.

'That's Stormfly, a Deadly Nadder,' Merida explained, and the Queen jumped back with a hand on her chin as it let loose three short blasts of fire, disintegrating the targets it aimed for.

The dragon joined the others, and then the red dragon with spines peeled away, and did a high-speed lap around the oval. As it did so, flames started to slowly work their way around the dragons body, until it was just a speeding fireball.

'That's Hookfang, a Monstrous Nightmare,' Merida continued, and Elinor nodded. Monstrous Nightmare indeed. It took out three more targets with deadly accuracy, then joined the others.

Elinor wasn't sure it could get any more impressive than that, but the last dragon, a frightening looking green creature with two heads, began to release a cloud of green gas in the air.

'That's Barf and Belch, a Hideous Zippleback,'

Stoick looked over to her and Merida, and warned them not to panic, and then the cloud exploded in the air, a blast of hot air making the Scottish cry out in alarm.

The three dragons looped around the arena once more, and landed in the middle. Elinor was alarmed that the rider of the Nadder was a young girl, maybe Merida's age. Could she allow her daughter to ride on these clearly dangerous beasts? And in mens clothing, nonetheless.

'It's Hiccup and Toothless!' Merida said happily, pointing to the sky. The dragon that Hiccup was riding was like a giant bat with a bright red tail fin. Elinor watched with a (very unladylike) open mouth as he soared and looped and basically showed off. She snuck a sideways glance at her daughter, and her heart was warmed by the excitement and awe on Merida's face.

'He's quite talented, isn't he?' she ventured, and Merida nodded.

'He's pretty amazing,' she said, and then realised that she'd said it out loud. 'I mean, they all are. I wish I could fly like that,'

Elinor watched as Toothless took out a number of targets with a burst of blue light, then landed beside the young girl rider. The crowd burst into excited applause, and he raised a hand. Beside her, Merida clapped enthusiastically. She didn't envy her daughters decision, although it appeared as though her mind was already made up.

xXx

~ Ian Macintosh ~

He and the other suitors were waiting with their parents. His father had a reassuring hand on his shoulder. William and his father were talking quietly, while Colin and Hiccup chatted amiably, their fathers patiently waiting in silence.

Ian's heart was in his throat. Things weren't looking good, and he was more nervous than he'd ever been in his life. The doors to the library opened, and Merida came out, followed by the King and Queen. She looked stunning, in her blue gown, her curls framing her face, and a small smile tugging at the corners of her lips.

'Hello, everyoneâ€|' she said quietly. There were a few murmured responses, but otherwise just nervous silence. She gestured for them to join her in the library, alone, and Ian followed William through the doors. They snapped shut behind him.

It was just the five of them now.

'Hi,' Merida said, less formal now that their parents weren't there. 'Firstly, I want you guys to know that this was a truly, genuinely horrible decision to make. You're all amazing people, and I'm so glad we've become friends. I hope we can stay friends for the rest of our lives, regardless of what is said here today,'

Ian could tell that she had rehearsed this. He could see her going over it in her head.

'And so, I have finally made a decision,'

****A/N:**

>

>Well, well, well. It has been a long time, no? Happy New Year!
And so much has happened! I mean, Frozen came out, and holy hell, was it amazing! I adored it. ******

>I got my tattoos, and they look amazing, I'm so happy with them.

>I have so many fics that have popped up in the last couple of weeks, and so I need to work out which one I'm doing after this. Maybe you guys can help with that?

****Also, wow! So many reviews! I love you all, you're amazing!****

****FUN FACT: I actually met a real life fan! It was amazing! I've never encountered that much squealing. And I am so sorry, my dear, I can't remember your url/pen name for the life of me! So please let me know, because you made my year. And I had a pretty crap year, so thanks. ********

****This chapter is for my darling Suzette, who not only beta'd but really helped me when I was stuck. She's one of the greatest people on the planet.****

****You're all so beautiful and amazing. I hope you enjoyed the chapter.****

>Stay Shiny
>x Knut

****Fics to be written in the future;****
>Mericcup Pirate AU (HTTYD, Brave)
>Jelsa (Jack Frost x Elsa(ROTG, Frozen))

>Dalek (Deryn x Alek (Leviathan))

>Review and let me know which one you'd like to read next!**

14. Wounded

****Chase the Wind**
>Chapter Fourteen; Wounded**

****A/N;**
>PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU READ THE CHAPTER.
I know it's certainly strange to see these at the beginning of a chapter, no? I will be brief, as you are no doubt eager to read because I've been a terrible author and taken my time. First of all, again with the bugging to update. This needs to stop, guys. I mean, I don't mind a quick 'update soon!' at the end of a review, but otherwise is kinda not cool. I promise you I'll finish this fic, and so I would like for you to trust me on this.**
>Second, I would like to send a HUGE thank you to Suzette's Blue, who has been amazing for me these last few months. She's definitely this fic's governess or something, making sure it's raised proper and whatnot. A nice governess.

****Finally, my FUN FACT;****
>THIS FIC IS NOT HISTORICALLY ACCURATE. I'm quite the history buff myself, and of course in history Merida would not even be ELIGIBLE for the throne, never mind Hiccup. I am aware of this. However, due to the fact that it's a fanfic, I reckon I'm okay. I don't mean to disappoint any readers, but the Vikings also didn't have dragons. That's a huge inaccuracy right there.**

****Finally, I just wanted to let you all know just how much I love you. So much.****
>The next chapter I'm hoping to have up within the week, as a special present because I've been such a terrible author.
Enjoy
~**

'Hi,' Merida said, less formal now that their parents weren't there. 'Firstly, I want you guys to know that this was a truly, genuinely horrible decision to make. You're all amazing people, and I'm so glad we've become friends. I hope we can stay friends for the rest of our lives, regardless of what is said here today,'

Ian could tell that she had rehearsed this. He could see her going over it in her head.

'And so, I have finally made a decision,'

xXx

_~ Hiccup ~

>

Hiccup took a deep breath. He'd been mentally preparing himself for this moment for days. Would he make a good king? Would the Scots even accept him? He snuck a peek at the other suitors.

Ian looked worried, which was unusual. He was always so cocky, so sure of himself. Had something happened to make him doubt his luck? It unnerved Hiccup a little, so he just reasoned with himself that somehow, Ian had already found out about his and Merida's feelings for each other. That must be it.

Colin looked pretty relaxed. Not cocky-relaxed either. Just genuinely curious, as though he knew he wasn't going to be picked, and had made peace with the idea. Hiccup envied him a little. He was about to be engaged to the girl of his dreams, why couldn't he just relax? Merida had assured him that they would be together. There was nothing stopping them.

William looked nothing but hopeful. Poor guy. He would have his heart broken, no doubt. Hiccup knew that, under no circumstances, would Merida choose William. He just wasn't... ruler material. He was clever, yeah, but would a nation follow him into battle?

Hiccup shook his head, realising that he'd tuned out of whatever it was Merida was saying.

'And so... my decision is... Ian Macintosh,' she said quietly, and the reactions were instantaneous.

'What?' asked both Ian and Hiccup at once. One in pure shock, the other with an edge of anger to his tone.

'Thank you, gentlemen,' Merida said quickly, nodding her head. Then she turned and left without a word, without an explanation, and without her newly betrothed. The four of them just stood there, in stunned silence.

'I... I thought... for sure...' Colin started with a frown. The other three turned to face him. 'Well, it's just... I thought she'd pick Hiccup, no offence, Ian,'

'Offence taken,' Ian said with a frown. 'Why would she pick Hiccup? He's a Viking.'

Hiccup was silent, just staring at the door.

'Now, please excuse me, gentlemen, I have to go get ready. I'm assuming I'm having dinner with the royal family tonight,' Ian said with a growl, and he left the room.

Hiccup was still in shock. He felt a hand on his shoulder, and looked up at Colin.

'You okay?' he asked, and Hiccup shook his head.

'No... no, not really,'

'You were the reason she kept going back to the Vikings, weren't you?' William said quietly, and Hiccup nodded.

'She... we were supposed to be together. Have a happy ending and all that nonsense...' the Viking said quietly. 'Maybe Astrid was right,'

They were interrupted when Stoick made his way into the room. 'Oh, son,' he said quietly, and Hiccup just pushed past all of them without a word. Once outside, he caught a glimpse of Merida and Ian, talking quietly to their parents. Before Merida could see him looking, Ian put his arm around her waist, and pulled her closer, sending a warning look over his shoulder at the Viking. Hiccup turned and went in the opposite direction.

xXx

~ Merida ~

|| Four Hours Prior to her Announcement ||

Merida was lighter than air as she had her afternoon tea in her room, feeding little squares of beef to Fafnir and singing as she waltzed around. She would be making her decision to the suitors in a manner of hours, and then she and Hiccup could finally be themselves around each other. She couldn't keep the grin off her face.

A knock at the door made her spin around, her skirts twirling around her. 'Who is it?' she called.

'Just me, lass,' came her fathers voice, and she let him in quickly. He picked up Fafnir gently and stroked his head. 'Your mother wants to talk to you in the war room before you make your decision.'

'Okay,' Merida replied, and she followed her father down the stairs, a little worried at his silence.

She was surprised to find her brothers in the war room as well, with her mother. They were being oddly well behaved, and something didn't feel right.

'What's going on?' she asked, and her mother stood up.

'Merida, we need to have a chat about the Vikings...'

'What about them?' she asked, crossing her arms. She was over everyone not trusting them.

'The Lords have put forth a...complaint. They're worried that giving the Vikings power will ultimately lead to the demise of the Scottish rule...'

'What a load of rubbish,' Merida snapped, and Elinor nodded her head.

'Nonetheless, it has been decided that... my dear... we can't allow you to choose Hiccup as a suitor...' Elinor said quietly, and Merida's heart dropped.

'I beg your pardon?'

'We would much rather we give the Vikings time to grow accustomed to living under Scottish rule, Merida. We don't trust them, especially with the dragons.'

Merida was trying very hard to reign in her anger, but she wasn't doing a very good job. 'This isn't fair...' she said, choosing her words carefully.

'I know, love... but this is what being a Queen is all about... sacrifices,' Elinor said, moving around the table and attempting to comfort her only daughter. Merida shied away.

'This whole setup was so I could marry for _love_. And I found someone that I would want to spend my life with, and I'm _not allowed_?' she screeched, sitting down as the enormity of her mother's words washed over her. 'I love him, mother... do I... do I really have to choose someone else?'

Elinor fell into the seat opposite her daughter in a most unladylike fashion, leaning forward to grasp Merida's hands in her own.

'I'm so sorry, lass. If I'd have known... I would have done anything to change it. But we can't anger the lords and have things go back to the way they were. Young Hiccup will understand, won't he? He's in line to be chief, after all. He must know to some degree what you're going through...?'

Merida just shook her head, tears filling her eyes. Her brothers were looking at her with pity etched in their faces.

'What else have you all planned without me?' she asked quietly. 'Why are they here?'

Elinor looked over at her sons, expression apologetic. Merida didn't mean to sound so horrible, but she felt horrible. She couldn't be with Hiccup.

'The Vikings will be asked to return to their campsite tomorrow morning. We'll be sending a few of our people with them, including one of your brothers. We can't allow them to keep the dragon knowledge to themselves, as it could greatly impact our country. These Scotsmen will be taught how to train and ride the dragons, '

'What? They won't agree to that!' Merida said. 'The dragon knowledge is guarded fiercely, they won't just give it to anyone, you know, '

'They gave it to you,' Fergus said quietly, looking at his daughter. 'Both the manual, and a dragon of your own. We need a few choice people to learn this knowledge, one from each Clan, including one of your brothers, and one of the other suitors that aren't to become king. We'll be moving them to the castle that Mor'du was living in. '

'They're ruins! No one could live there,' Merida got to her feet again at the injustice of it all. 'Even if they were to rebuild, it would take weeks, '

'Enough,' Fergus said firmly, and Merida wilted under his gaze. 'This

is happening, Merida. You have a mere three hours to come to terms with it, and accept it. So I suggest you stop acting like a silly princess and think like a future queen, do you understand me?'

Merida levelled him with a defiant look for a moment, then sighed.

'Yes sir, I understand.'

xXx

Merida pulled her hood over her curls and snuck down to the stables. Angus was waiting for her, and he was saddled in a record time. She leapt onto his back, and the two tore off out of the castle grounds, and into the woods nearby.

They ran faster than Merida ever remembered being able to, and circled around hidden pathways in the forest, used by deer and the like. When they came across the circle of standing stones, they came to a halt. Merida dismounted, and stood in the circle, running her fingertips over the cool stone. When she got to the piece that had crushed Mor'du, she grew teary again.

'Why did you stop me all those years ago!?' she cried at no one in particular. 'Why just postpone the inevitable? Is this my punishment for being a horrible princess?'

Angus was watching her warily, flicking his tail back and forth.

'Why did I follow those stupid wisps in the first place? I could have just gone straight to Macintosh, bypassed Hiccup. I would never have found out about the Vikings until I got home...'

Tears started to well up in her eyes.

'I hate you!' she whispered. 'I hate you,'

She curled up against the stone and sobbed.

She cried for what she was about to do to Hiccup. He would hate her. Call her a coward for not standing up for what she believed in. But most importantly, he would never look at her that way again, with his warm smile and bright, clever eyes. He would well and truly hate her.

She looked up to see one of the wisps floating a few feet in front of her.

'Haven't you done enough damage?' she hissed, but it just beckoned her forwards with it's little arms, whispering nonsense. 'No, go away. I won't listen to you anymore...'

The wisp gave it one last shot, but Merida stuck out her leg and attempted to kick it away. Her foot fell right through the blue smoke, and it vanished with a disappointed sigh.

She sat in the damp for another hour, until her body couldn't coax any more tears. She stood up, brushed the dirt and moss off of her

backside and pulled her cloak tighter around herself. She steeled herself.

'I can do this, Angus,' she told the horse, who nudged her gently. 'I can do this, for my people. I will be the Queen they deserve, and Hiccup will go on to be the Viking Chief, like he was supposed to.'

She mounted in a quick, practiced movement, and took a deep breath. Then she nudged Angus with her heels, and they started a steady canter back to DunBroch.

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

|| The Present ||

Hiccup was sitting in the dragon pen, on his back next to Toothless, who was sheltering him from the cold Scottish air. The dragon could sense that his friend was more than upset. Shattered, more like. He'd been out there for hours.

'Hiccup?'

The young Viking sighed. It had only been a matter of time before someone found him, but he was glad that person was Stoick and not Astrid. He didn't think he could face her just yet.

'Yeah, dad?'

'Are you alright?' Stoick asked, through the thick hide of Toothless' wings. The dragon made no move to lift them, so the Chief just sat himself down on the other side.

'What do you think?' Hiccup replied smartly, but regretted it immediately. 'I think she used me, dad. I don't know how, but I think she did.'

'We've been told that we're being moved tomorrow. I'd assume somewhere further away. The Scottish don't trust us, son. They want us far away so that they have enough warning if we attack. But they also want to send some Scots with us, and we're to teach them how to train dragons too...'

Hiccup sat up, touching Toothless' side. The dragon lifted his wing.

'They can't expect us to share a secret like that without any say in the matter,' he said with a frown. 'Surely?'

'Well, we're taking one of the princes with us, as well as the Dingwall boy, and two others from the other clans. We'll get by, Hiccup. And I just wanted to say... when we get back, I'd like you to start as acting Chief. It's about time you took over...'

Hiccup gave his dad a small smile, and nodded. 'Yes sir...'

Stoick stood to leave, and Hiccup rose with him.

'Go pack up your things, and be ready to leave at dawn, okay?' Stoick said, and Hiccup nodded, heading towards the castle. 'Oh, and Hiccup?'

'Yeah dad?'

'We're all proud of you. And we're all behind you,' Stoick said, causing another small smile to spread across Hiccup's face.

xXx

Hiccup put the last of his things in the saddlebags designed specifically for dragonback, leaving out only his father's pelt and a spare tunic. He was planning on sleeping out under the stars with Toothless tonight. With the bags and tunic tucked under his arm, and his pelt draped over his shoulders (it was way too big for him - have you seen Stoick's shoulders?), Hiccup closed the door to the room and ducked down the staircase. He'd specifically been given a room with a barely used staircase that led right down to the dragon paddock.

About halfway down, however, he ran right into the last person he wanted to see right now.

xXx

~ Merida ~

With the pelt, and the dim light of the staircase, Hiccup almost looked intimidating. Like a real Viking, in his leather flight suit and heavy expression. She had to remind herself that this was Hiccup, the boy who loved her. He wouldn't hurt her... he couldn't. Hiccup couldn't hurt a fly.

'What are you doing here?' she asked, surprised. A frown marred his handsome features.

'I'm getting ready to leave. What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be making nicey nice with your fiance?' Hiccup asked quietly. It sent a shiver down her spine.

'Dinner is finished. I was preparing for bed,' Merida replied, hating that he was standing a few steps above her on the spiral staircase. There was a fire torch on the wall behind him, throwing shadows across his face.

'Well, Princess, I know for a fact that your room is on the opposite side of the castle, where your betroted is staying... so why come around this way?' Hiccup asked coldly, and Merida couldn't help but feel that stabbing guilt in her stomach.

'I... I don't have to answer to you. I'm a princess. The future Queen, even, so you... can't talk to me like that...'

Something crossed Hiccup's face - something she didn't know if she liked or not.

'... you don't want to see him, do you?' Hiccup asked quietly, coming down a step. 'You didn't want to choose him... they made you,'

She composed herself. All she needed was Hiccup fighting this marriage. He would have all the Vikings behind him, and it would just cause trouble.

'I don't know what you're talking about. Ian and I are very much in love, and he will be a fine king-'

'You're lying to me...' Hiccup snapped, coming down another step and invading her personal space. Merida couldn't breathe without inhaling his scent - the scent of the leather, the hide and the pelt. It was an earthy smell, one that she had grown accustomed to. And the last time they'd been this close... he'd kissed her. Or she'd kissed him. She couldn't quite remember, what with him being so close.

'Hiccup, I would really appreciate it if you stepped away from me, please,' she said quietly, through gritted teeth. He didn't move.

'Why would you lie to me? Why choose Macintosh? We all know that he's not going to let you be you, Merida...'

'That's Princess Merida to-'

'We finally had our shot! We could have been together, and we wouldn't have been doing anything wrong. Everything fell into place for a reason, and you just threw it all away... why would you do that?'

His voice was strong, filled with anger rather than hurt or sadness. She didn't feel the need to comfort him at all. She felt the need to fight back.

'Hiccup, you have no idea the pressures that are put on me as a royal, so don't you even think that you know ****anything**** about what happened in that library,' she hissed, coming up another step to meet him, maybe invade his space a little.

It didn't work. The stairs were too steep, and she was looking directly at his chest if she didn't crane her neck up to look him in the eyes. So she did, and she found them blazing with anger.

'No, it's okay, Merida. I think I know exactly what happened...' he said. Although his voice had come down in volume, it still shook with frustration.

'Enlighten me,' Merida snapped, crossing her arms.

'You chose your country over love. And that may seem like a good idea now, but when you're locked in the drawing room stabbing your fingers while you sew, or writing letters to stuffy old important people, or serving tea to scatterbrained ladies... just think that you could have been riding and shooting every day... training on dragonback instead of that weird Dingwall kid-'

'You're taking William?' Merida asked suddenly, surprised at the choice. 'But he was scared of the dragons...'

'I don't know, but that isn't the point. The point is, Merida, that

you could have had everything you wanted with me. But you've been brought down to being a tea party planner and a baby maker. And forgive me, but that isn't the Merida I know and came to love.'

The reality of his words hit her hard, but she wouldn't break down. Not in front of him. She couldn't.

'We were never going to work, Hiccup. You're a Viking, and I needed someone who knew the land well enough to help me rule it,' she said quietly, not meeting his eyes for fear of bursting into tears.

'And I'm sorry if I led you on, or led you to believe that we could be together in the end, but the fact of the matter is, we're too different. Now, if you'll excuse me... I was making my way to bed.'

She pushed past him, heading up the stairs, only to have him grab her wrist to prevent her from leaving.

'Hiccup, please... I can't be seen talking to you. It's... improper...'

She heard him scoff, before saying 'Don't expect to see me at your wedding, _Your Highness._'

And then he was gone.

Her knees buckled, and she sat herself down on the step, pulling her knees in close. She listened to his footsteps going down the stone staircase - the thud of his foot and the higher, metallic sound his prosthetic made - until he reached the bottom. When he slammed the wooden door with a curse, she finally allowed herself to cry. She sat there for a good fifteen minutes, wiping the never ending supply of tears, before she moved.

The walk back to her room was hard, what with people offering her congratulations and whatnot. She held it together until she got to her room, where she changed in silence. It was only a few hours ago that she had been dancing in this room, excited at the prospect of spending her life with Hiccup. And now he hated her.

She crawled into her bed, pulling the doona up to her chin, and simply lay awake. She was all out of tears, left with only an aching heart.

Someone knocked on her door, and she recognised the voice as her mothers. She ignored it, but Elinor came in anyway. She didn't say anything, just sat on the bed and stroked her daughter's wild curls. She stood up, placed something on the bed and left.

Before Merida could roll over to check what it was, Fafnir crawled over her shoulder, making little squeaking noises. He curled up under her chin, and Merida fell asleep stroking his smooth scales.

The little dragon was going to be her lifeline these next few weeks, she knew it.

****A/N: *Sionn is pronounced Shaun. Enjoy the chap!****

****Chase the Wind****

>Chapter Fifteen; Show Us The Way**

~ William ~

The ride to the Viking camp was not only long, but incredibly awkward. He and the other three clan members were riding on horseback, on their own, following the young Prince Hubert. He had been quiet the whole trip, and William didn't know if it had anything to do with him striking out on his own, without his brothers, or if it was because of what had happened with Merida.

Behind Hubert was Sionn, a burly blonde man with a poor, patchy excuse for a beard, from Clan MacGuffin. Sionn was a man of few words, and hadn't said anything except 'hello' and 'my name is Sionn'. William remembered seeing him compete in the Games, however, and knew that he was incredibly skilled with the sword.

Behind Sionn was the Macintosh representative, Briana. Her presence had plunged the group into awkward silence. None of them really agreed with the idea of a female dragon rider, and they were sure the Vikings would agree and send her back. She was a tall woman, quite beautiful, with her rich brown hair tied in elegant twists and braids, and her determined brown eyes keeping a look out for any potential danger. Tied behind her horse was another horse, just for her belongings.

Apparently dragon riders in training needed at least four gowns.

The sun was just setting when the small group arrived at the Viking camp, finding it half deserted. There were hardly any dragons to be seen, save for a few of the small ones, like Merida's pet. As they walked through the small village, a Viking came to meet them.

'You're the Scots, I presume. My name is Fishlegs, welcome to camp.'

Fishlegs led them towards a humble wooden house and had them tie up their horses. William watched as Briana slid gracefully down, and patted the creature's neck.

'You will be able to stay here tonight, as the owners are helping with the construction of our new settlement.'

'New settlement?' William asked, frowning.

'Yes. Your King has ordered us to move further out. We suspect that he fears us and the dragons. Hereâ€|'

Fishlegs began to place food in front of them. Briana eyed it nervously, before nibbling hesitantly. They ate their food in silence, and Fishlegs showed them to their rooms. The moment William's head hit the pillow, he fell asleep.

xXx

'Before you can even attempt harnessing a dragon, you need to cram as much of the general dragon knowledge into your head as you possibly can. You will obviously have more knowledge about your specific dragon, but as you don't know which one will accept you, we try to teach new riders about all the dragons,'

The four Scots were sitting in the Great Hall, sharing the dragon book. Fishlegs was teaching them the basics " classes and more common dragons. William was fascinated, and Briana seemed bored. Sionn just didn't seem to comprehend. Hubert was like William " enthralled in this new, fantastical information.

'When are we going to ride one?' Sionn suddenly asked, and Fishlegs raised an eyebrow. William grew wary as the Viking gave them a mischievous look.

'Come with me' he said, and led the small group outside. He whistled, and William watched in horror as a heavy-set dragon with a nasty looking face came flying out of nowhere. It landed with a thud, and bared its teeth. Fishlegs grinned and gestured to the dragon.

'Come on Sionn, get on, if you think you're ready'

Meatlug gave a menacing snarl, and Sionn jumped back in fright. Hubert's eyes grew large with excitement, and William was surprised to find Briana holding her ground, even though she looked just as terrified as Sionn.

'Go on, Briana, give her a pat' Fishlegs encouraged, coming to stand next to her. Meatlug eyed the young woman carefully as she slowly reached out a shaking hand. She touched the dragon's nose gently, wincing as if she expected to be eaten on the spot. Meatlug gave a rumbling purr, and Fishlegs congratulated the beautiful woman on her accomplishment.

William, Hubert and Sionn stared, stunned, as Briana shot them a smug look.

xXx

The four of them were being shown the proper way to approach a dragon (using Meatlug as a practice dummy) when something shook the ground. William turned his head to see the biggest dragon he'd ever seen in his life.

'Ah' they shouldn't be back yet' Fishlegs said to himself, confused. 'Ruffnut! What's going on?'

The Viking named Ruffnut had been carried in the claws of the large dragon, which gently set her down on the ground.

'You know, I was only kidding. I think Hiccup's gone loco,' she called, crossing her arms. 'He wants to see if Sharpwing can lift a building without completely destroying it'

Fishlegs led the group over to her " the Scots watching Sharpwing warily.

'What do you mean?'

'He thinks it'll save building time if they can move the buildings already here. I've been told to test it out on one of the smaller buildings. Hiccup suggested his place,'

'Sharpwing isn't a trained dragon,' Fishlegs said, looking up at the Timberjack. 'How are we supposed to get him to understand?'

'That thing isn't trained?' Briana asked nervously, and Ruffnut shrugged.

'Not officially. He's just helpful, aren't you pal?' she said, petting the dragon's leg. Sharpwing lowered his head to sniff at the terrified newcomers.

'Wellâ€¦ let's give it a shot, then. You lot can stay and watch, as long as you stay out of the way, or you can head back to the house. It's up to you really.'

None of them moved, curious to see how the two Vikings would handle the situation.

Ruffnut climbed up onto Sharpwing's neck slowly and cautiously, and Fishlegs mounted Meatlug in a swift movement. William watched as the two dragons took to the air, and directed the dragon.

'This is amazing,' William said to Hubert, who nodded in agreement.

Together, Ruffnut and Fishlegs managed to get the message across to Sharpwing that they wanted him to grasp the house. Briana winced as his claws splintered the wood, and they watched in amazement as the small building was lifted a few feet from the ground. However, it proved to be too heavy, even for the massive Timberjack. The house slipped from his grasp, and hit the ground with a crash.

Briana jumped with a squeak, and they could hear Ruffnut laughing from way up in the air.

'We may need to rethink this strategyâ€¦' Fishlegs called with a laugh.

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

Hiccup had watched proudly as the village started to take shape around him. He'd been acting chief since they'd gotten back, but it was plain to everyone that he was throwing himself into his work to try and put the incident with Merida out of his mind.

'Hiccup, these Scots are actually getting close to harnessing. I think that it would be, uhâ€¦ beneficialâ€¦ for you to do the basics,'

'Fishlegs, the last thing I want to do is attempt to train some stuffy lords how to ride dragons so that they can take the knowledge back to their _new queen_, and turn on usâ€¦'

Fishlegs rolled his eyes, and leaned forward.

'You need to let this thing with Merida go, for the sake of the Vikings of Berk, okay? If you're going to be chief, then you need to man up. You're going to meet Merida again. And we don't want to start our life here with a feud of any kind, understand?'

Hiccup raised an eyebrow.

'You know so much, Fishlegsâ€¦ you should be chief instead,'

It didn't have his usual sarcastic bite to it, but at least he was starting to sound like his old self. Together, he and Fishlegs headed over to the Scot's little hut. William was reading one of his books, while Hubert flicked lazily through the Dragon Manual. Briana was sitting at the table, drafting a letter to a family member, no doubt.

'Where's Sionn?' Fishlegs asked, and they all looked up. Hiccup registered the expressions of surprise at his presence.

'I think he's training with Snotloutâ€¦' William replied, standing.

'Right. You can pick him up on the way. Can you lot be dressed and at the Dragon Academy in, sayâ€¦ fifteen minutes?' Hiccup said, and he could see the excitement and nervousness in their eyes. He smirked, and left the building quickly. Fishlegs gave a chuckle and followed him out.

Mor'Du's castle had been completely turned into a dragon wonderland. Old rooms were now sleeping areas for the unharnessed dragons, and a new academy ring had been fashioned in what used to be the throne room. They had dug out even further, and created a hatchery. The village had sprung up around the castle, and the Vikings were once again settling into their new life.

'Welcome to Dragon Training!' Hiccup called, echoing Gobber's words from all of those years ago. 'In these pens, are a few young, unharnessed dragons, and we're going to try you out with a few different ones,'

Hiccup waved his hand, and the first dragon was let out. A pale gray Nadder with dark blue markings. It was male, and a bit mischievous, but Hiccup knew that the dragon was friendly and would be an easy harness.

'Stay still, and let him have a sniff. You'll know if he's interested in youâ€¦'

The Nadder wandered around the arena, flicking its tail and making curious clicking noises. It sniffed at Hubert, and William, and completely ignored Briana, much to her displeasure. However, when it got to Sionn, it stopped and eyed him off. Hiccup could see that the blonde man was scared out of his mind.

'Please don't hurt me,' he whispered to the dragon, and it cocked its head.

'He likes you, Sionn,' Fishlegs pointed out, and the others stepped away. It was just Sionn and the Nadder in the centre of the

ring.

'Extend your handâ€¦ you need to make a bond with himâ€¦' Hiccup called.

'Are you kidding?' Sionn called back, eyeing off the dragons teeth. Although the Nadder was young, it was still fully grown and quite intimidating. Still, he sucked in a breath and held out his hand. The Nadder sniffed it curiously, before pressing his nose into Sionn's palm. It began humming happily.

'Ohâ€¦ wowâ€¦ is- is that it?' Sionn asked, stroking the creatures nose.

'Not by far,' Hiccup said, approaching the pair. 'First, you'll need to give him a name, and then you have the arduous task of training him. It's a long road, but one that's worth it. This dragon is going to be your closest companion, Sionn. I've never entrusted a dragon to someone who wasn't a Viking. Don't make me regret this decisionâ€¦'

Sionn nodded, still stroking the dragons nose.

'I promise, I'll look after himâ€¦ I promise,' Sionn said, and Hiccup shook his hand.

'Thank you, it means a lot to me. And congratulations!'

Fishlegs showed Sionn how to lead the dragon back into his pen, and then the two stood and watched as the next dragon was brought out. A Gronckle.

It turned its nose up to all the candidates, as did the next Nadder. The following dragon, however, was a Monstrous Nightmare.

It was a brilliant purple colour, with large twisted horns and intelligent eyes. She was less curious about the humans in her midst, but she still sniffed at their feet and wandered around a bit. She stopped a few times in front of Hubert, and that gave Hiccup all the indication he needed.

'Hubert, I want you to try and approach this dragon and harness her,' he called. William and Briana shuffled back, leaving the young redhead to face the dragon. She glared at him, as if daring him to come closer.

'I don't think she really wants me toâ€¦' Hubert called out.

'Hubert, we have dragons on hand if she decides to attack you, but she's used to people. Nightmares are just moody dragons. We'll bail you out if anything happensâ€¦'

Hubert inched closer and closer to the Nightmare, his hands up where the dragon could see them. She glared at him, but didn't move.

'Heyâ€¦dragonâ€¦ don't eat meâ€¦ pleaseâ€¦'

The dragon sniffed at him, and Hubert extended a hand. She nosed it

without a thought, and Hubert gave a little grin.

'Hey dragon,' he cooed, and she rested her head on the ground. Hubert was on the ground petting her head in a manner of seconds, making the dragon purr.

'Well done. Again, you've got a companion for life, Hubert. You'll need to name her, and then you can start the training process,' Hiccup said, shaking his hand as well.

'Okay. And I promise to take care of her tooâ€|' Hubert said, and Hiccup gave him a small smile.

'Thank you. And congratulationsâ€|'

xXx

It had been three days of attempted harnessing by Briana and William, and both were starting to get downhearted. None of the dragons had been right for them so far, and Hiccup was running out of ideas. Hubert and Sionn had been supportive, standing in the arena every day, for hours at a time, eager for their new friends to harness so they could all start their training together.

'I don't want you to give up, okay? There's a dragon here for each of you. We just have to find themâ€|' Hiccup reassured. Briana nodded sadly, while William just seemed more determined than ever.

'Hiccup!'

They turned to see Astrid running towards them, a grin on her face.

'I have an ideaâ€| have you tried either of them on Sharpwing?'

Hiccup cocked his head to the side in thought. Then he turned to the two Scots.

'Let's go meet Sharpwing,' he said cheerfully.

xXx

'You really think one of us can harness _that_?' Briana asked, staring up at the Timberjack. Sharpwing watched them curiously, lowering his great head to their level.

'Worth a shot, isn't it?' Hiccup asked. They had gathered a crowd, including Fishlegs, Astrid, the twins and the Scots. They were all interested to see the first harnessing of a Timberjack.

'Briana, would you like to go first?'

'Ohâ€| I supposeâ€|' she replied, going pale. She picked up her skirts and approached the dragon slowly. She reached out her hand, and Sharpwing sniffed it. He nuzzled it, but that was all. He went back to watching the rest of the group with interest.

Briana put a hand to her mouth and Hiccup could see tears welling in

her eyes. Fishlegs put an arm around her shoulders, and pulled her away from the dragon. She didn't cry, but stood with the others, her head high and proud.

William approached the dragon next, taking a deep breath. Sharpwing looked down at him curiously, and William extended his hand.

'Hey buddyâ€¦ I'm not gonna hurt youâ€¦' he said, and the dragon sniffed it. Then, to everyone's surprise, it nudged him. Of course, this sent William sprawling on to the ground, but he didn't care.

'Didâ€¦ did I do it?' William asked, and Hiccup gave him a grin.

'Ruffnut, try and climb on Sharpwing, please,' said the chief. Ruffnut moved towards the Timberjack with familial ease, raising a hand and petting his leg.

'Hey pal, I'm just gonnaâ€¦ jump up hereâ€¦' she cooed, attempting to climb up his leg. Sharpwing shook her off with a warning growl, and Hiccup and Fishlegs shared a grin.

'You did it, William,' Hiccup congratulated. 'You harnessed the Timberjack,'

No one noticed Briana slink away from the crowd with a sniff.

xXx

~ Snotlout ~

Snotlout was cleaning off Hookfang's scales when the Scottish girl ran past. With a confused frown, he got up and followed her, Hookfang lumbering behind. He followed her to the arena, where she stood in the centre.

'Heyâ€¦ you okay?' he asked, and she whipped around. She'd been crying. Snotlout didn't like it when girls cried. Not that many of the girls he knew had ever cried.

'You startled meâ€¦' she said, turning away.

'Why are you crying? Viking girls never cryâ€¦' Snotlout asked, and she laughed coldly.

'Viking girls are hardly girls anyway,' she bit back. 'Wearing pants and riding dragonsâ€¦ you know, maybe I like my skirts, and having my hair look nice. Maybe I want to be able to retain some of my ladylike self, but still be a trainer. Is that why they don't like me?'

Snotlout let her ramble on. Mainly because he didn't know what to sayâ€¦ or how to comfort someone having a breakdown of any kind.

'I mean, I'm trying my hardest, but they just don't want me as their companion. Do they know that I'm not a Viking? I want to be tough like Astrid, or Ruffnutâ€¦ even Princess Merida rode on the dragonsâ€¦' Snotlout, am I not cut out for this?' she said, tears

welling in her eyes.

Snotlout looked at her, dumbfounded for a moment. Then he noticed something behind them.

'Wellâ€¦ this little one seems to think you're okay?' he said, pointing.

Behind them, peeking out of one of the dragon pens, was a dragon. A Typhoomerang hatchling. Barely a few months old, it wasn't nearly its full size, but it was about the size of Toothless, or Stormfly. Its yellow-orange scales were shiny with health, and its bright eyes watched the pair curiously.

'Come on lil guyâ€¦' Snotlout called, and he coaxed the dragonet to them with a small handful of fish.

'Snotloutâ€¦ this isn't a good ideaâ€¦ I mean, maybe I'm just not able to do this. I'm sure Macintosh can find another representative â€¦ oh â€¦ hello thereâ€¦' she trailed off as the dragon stared up at her.

'If Ruffnut can do it, you canâ€¦' Snotlout said. The dragon crawled around her carefully, warily, and she grimaced as she picked up a slimy fish. The dragon was quite content to eat it right out of the palm of her hand. She smiled and petted its head. The dragon hummed, nosing her hand and sniffing her skirts.

'Snotloutâ€¦ did Iâ€¦ I meanâ€¦' Briana whispered, afraid of frightening the dragon away.

'Well, get up and walk awayâ€¦ if he follows you, then yesâ€¦ he's all yoursâ€¦' Snotlout said, extending a hand. She took it, and he pulled her to her feet. He offered her his arm, and they walked away from the dragonet, who squeaked in annoyance.

Briana could barely keep the smile from her face as it ran ahead of them, blocking the exit.

'And where do you think you're going without me?' it seemed to say.

xXx

~ Hiccup ~

'Welcome to Dragon Training. Over the next few weeks, you will be instructed in how to care for your dragons, and they will learn to trust in you. Your dragons will be by your side at all times. You will have a trained rider as a partner for most of your training, and one day you'll be able to stand here and maybe train new riders. It would certainly save me from doing itâ€¦' Hiccup laughed at his own joke. 'Now, would you introduce me to your dragons, please?'

Sionn patted his Nadder on the neck, and grinned.

'This is Windskimmer,'

Hubert introduced his Monstrous Nightmare as Brightclaw, and William introduced Sharpwing, even though everyone already knew his

name.

'And Briana?'

'This is Garnetâ€|' she said with a proud smile, petting the dragon on the head.

'Garnet? You named a male typhoomerang _Garnet_?' Snotlout teased lightly, and Briana poked her tongue out in a most unladylike fashion.

'Yes. And when he's fully grown, he'll be big enough to eat Hookfang, so I would be quiet if I were youâ€|'

'Uhuh. He's going to grow wonky if you wear all those skirts while you're riding himâ€|'

'If Hookfang can carry your big head, Snotlout, I'm sure Garnet can carry my skirtsâ€|'

Hiccup sighed as the two bantered, but gave Astrid a hopeful smile. Perhaps they could turn this around, and get a few of the Scottish on their side. Merida be damned, he could turn this rag tag bunch into some of Berk's finest riders.

And he planned to do exactly that.

xXx

**A/N:

>Well, well, it has been a while, no?
I know I'm a horrible human and you all hate me, but nyeh. It's 2am and I've had so much fun with Briana and William and Snotlout that I don't even care. I do apologise for the lack of Merida, though. There will be plenty of her in the next chapter, I promise. And I know it's a filler - but hey. Fillers are needed because you can't just have plot after plot after plot. You need something to draw it out, right?**

Also, for those of you who'd like to know, HTTYD2 is _amazing_.

>This fic is obviously not compatible with the sequel, but by god, I wish I'd seen it before I started.

**FUN FACT; I cried watching HTTYD2. I won't deny it. It was amazing. So beautiful. The music, the animation, the _story and characters_. I saw an advanced screening, and I will be seeing it at least three more times in cinemas. **

Finally, I would just like to say that this chapter is brought to you by the ever-lovely Suzette's Blue, who not only reads my work to make sure it's tyop-free, but she helps me out with the story and when I need to deal with unfavourable reviews or messages. She is truly amazing. And very, very sexy.

Until the next chapter ~

>Stay Shiny

>x Maury

****Chase the Wind**
>Chapter Sixteen; **_Dragon Racing_**

Everyone had turned out for such a momentous occasion. There were many amongst the crowd who never thought they would see this moment. Hiccup's face was calm and collected, but even he found himself curious. The doors opened, and the gathered people gave a collective gasp.

'This is ridiculous,' Briana sniffed, stepping out of the hut. The Vikings gave a mighty cheer, and Tuffnut handed his brand new axe to Snotlout, clearly the loser of a bet. The Scottish lass was wearing _actual pants. _

'Let the dragon racing begin!' Hiccup cried, throwing a hand in the air. The Vikings of Berk went wild.

xXx

Hiccup leaned forwards in his chair, and watched with a grin as the Scots handled their dragons like true Vikings. Briana had quickly gotten used to the feeling of pants, and she found herself able to move about on her dragon's back with the ease of a pro. Adding to the four scots, Snotlout and Hookfang were competing, as well as Fishlegs and Meatlug. Astrid sat by him with an equally impressed expression on her face.

'You did well with this lot, Hic,' she said, pride in her voice.

'Thanks,' he replied, genuine warmth in his tone. It had taken them nearly a month of training to earn the right to participate in their first games. So far it was Sionn that was cleaning up, his Nadder fast and agile. Hiccup waved a hand, and Gobber sounded the horn.

'The Black Sheep!' Briana cried, and she bent low on her dragon's back, encouraging him to go faster. The sheep was launched into the air, causing a flurry of wingbeats. Sharpwing stole the sheep with ease, being the largest of all the dragons in the race. William dropped the sheep neatly in the basket, winning the game instantly. All of Berk was on their feet, cheering and screaming.

Hiccup, Astrid and Stoick were on their feet, applauding the new trainees. As such, they had completed their official dragon training, and were fully-fledged members of the Viking community.

xXx

Hiccup was helping Briana scrub race paint off of Garnet's hide when the messenger found him.

'Are you the chief, sir?'

'I am,' Hiccup replied with a friendly smile. The messenger handed him an important looking envelope.

'From the Royal Family, my lord,' he said with a bow. Hiccup directed him to the Hall, where he could rest and get himself food and drink.

Then he opened the envelope. Inside were five letters.

'Briana, this is for youâ€|' Hiccup said, handing it to her, and she nearly snatched it with glee. Briana loved her life as a trainer, but she was always eager to receive news from home. Her face fell a little.

'It's the royal wedding invitationâ€|' she told him, and Hiccup felt a knot forming in the pit of his stomach.

'Well, we'd better deliver the rest then, hm?'

xXx

Hiccup read his letter aloud to the four Scottish trainers.

'To the Chief of Clan Berk, as you are aware the royal wedding is upon us, and you are cordially invited to send a representative of your Clan to this momentous occasionâ€|' Hiccup read in a bored tone. William frowned.

'A representative?' he repeated, and Hiccup nodded, reading it over.

'How rudeâ€|' Briana said, also frowning. 'A royal wedding is a nationwide affair. Everyone from the highest of lords to the lowest of peasants is invited. For them to ask that you only send a representativeâ€| Hiccup that's really awfulâ€|'

'It's Macintosh. He's worried that you being there will sway Merida's decision. He doesn't know you're acting chief â€" he thinks it's Stoick,' William told them.

'I will discuss this matter with my father, he'll know how to respond appropriately. Otherwise you three must best start making preparations. We are all expected in DunBroch in three days timeâ€|' Hiccup told them.

'They've sent them out late in the hopes that we won't get there in time,' Briana said quietly. 'It takes nearly five to get there on horsebackâ€|'

'If it's alright with you three, I'd like to suggest that you go by dragonback. It will be faster, and will show the Scots that you're committed to our causeâ€|'

All the trainers shot him a dumbfounded look.

'Well of course we're going on dragonback. I'm not leaving Windskimmer hereâ€|' Sionn told them, and Hiccup felt his chest swell with pride.

xXx

'So they only want one Viking to attend this event, despite the fact that the entire nation is invited, hm?' Stoick said, reading the letter. They were in the Great Hall, in an alcove built especially for these sorts of small meetings. In the room was Stoick, Hiccup, Gobber and Hubert.

'Stoick, Hiccupâ€¦ I- I can't fathom why my sister would do this, but I would like to formally apologiseâ€¦'

'You've no need, Hubert. We're not as offended as you seem to think we should be,' Hiccup assured him. Hubert lowered his head, embarrassed.

'So who goes?' Gobber asked, and Hiccup exchanged a look with his father.

'It is asking for a representative. As I am no longer chief, I think I will go, if that's alright with Hiccup?' Stoick asked, and Hiccup nodded in relief.

'Good,' Stoick continued. 'We will leave in two days time.'

'Oh! I nearly forgotâ€¦ it is customary for the Clans to present the bride and groom with a giftâ€¦ sorry to spring it on youâ€¦' Hubert added.

'I'll think of somethingâ€¦' Hiccup declared, and the meeting was adjourned.

xXx

~ Merida ~

The woman in the mirror was not someone Merida recognised any more. She wore her cap daily. Her bow was collecting dust. Her bed had the same amount of sword chips in the beams as it had a month ago. If this was growing up, she hated it.

A sharp rap on her door snapped her from her self-pity. Her maidservant, Lorna, entered with a swift curtsy and immediately placed a jug of hot water on the vanity.

'Good morning, highness. The Queen requests that you meet her in her office this morning after you've eaten,' she said quietly, and Merida gave a short nod in affirmation.

'Also, the seamstress would care to know if you were available for a dress fitting this afternoon?' Lorna continued, and Merida dunked her face cloth in the hot water.

'I should be okay with that, as long as the Queen does not have anything for me to do,' she replied, before pressing the hot towel to her skin. Oh, to feel something againâ€¦

'Yes of course. Would there be anything else, milady?'

'No thankyou Lorna, you're excused.'

The maidservant left with a bow, and Merida proceeded to wake herself up. Then she used the rest of the warm water to scrub Fafnir's scales until they gleamed. The little dragon had gotten fat, but was very much enjoying living at the royal palace. He had free reign of the place, but was mostly content to trot around after Merida, sometimes setting things on fire or sitting on her shoulder.

Ian had told her to leave the dragon in her room on more than one

occasion, but Merida just bit back her retorts and defied him anyway. She couldn't afford to throw her country into war â€" the dragons would no doubt double the casualties. Her mother was waiting for her in her office â€" a spacious room with large windows and a warm fire.

'Good morning, Merida,' Elinor greeted her warmly as she sat down. 'How are you feeling this morning?'

'I have a dress fitting this afternoon,' the princess replied in a monotone. Elinor's face fell a little as guilt swept over her.

'Well, in that case, I demand that you take Angus out for the entire morning. Poor thing wasn't meant to be cooped up like he isâ€|'

'I'm sure Ian would have an issue with that. He doesn't want me "gallivanting about the kingdom"â€|' she replied, putting his words in air quotes. Elinor raised her eyebrow.

'Merida, the thing about men is that they're full of hot air. If we listened to everything they said, nothing would ever get done. So, as your mother and as your Queen, I am demanding that you take that bow of yours and go shoot things with your horse. Also Fafnir looks like he's getting fat and lazy. Make him use those wings of hisâ€|'

Merida's eyes glistened, and she was out of the door in an instant. She restrung her bow and slipped on her woollen hunting gown. As she was racing down the stairs she ran smack into her fiancÃ©.

'Careful, Meridaâ€| where are you going?' he asked, his hands on her shoulders. She shrugged them off.

'Riding. Queen's orders. Sorry!' she said with a quick, cheeky grin, and she slipped around him and took off.

Angus was already saddled when she arrived, and they took off without a moment of hesitation. Fafnir struggled to keep up, but soon found his wings. He knew to stay out of the way of the arrows, and often disappeared and reappeared with a dead bird or a rabbit in his jaws. Her old targets were faded and falling apart, but she knew her course instinctively. Only when she had run out of arrows and Angus' sides were heaving with breathlessness did they stop. Fafnir deposited a rabbit proudly on her lap. She grinned â€" the dragon had caught three of them, and a fat bird she couldn't identify. The kitchen staff would be happy with their haul. The sun was high in the sky as the trio made their way back to the castle, and the prospect of a dress fitting managed to dampen Merida's spirits. Her mother was wise â€" she needed to stop letting Ian and her father control her life. It was time to stand up for herself.

xXx

If it weren't for her circumstances, Merida probably would have loved this dress. It was a beautiful white silk, with detailed embroidery on the bodice and sleeves. She admired the way it looked on her, and tugged her hair into a less frantic position. Her mother smiled warmly at her.

'You look beautiful, lassâ€|' she complimented, and Merida noticed that the seamstress was beaming at the indirect praise.

'It is beautifulâ€|' she replied, staring at her reflection in the mirror. She wondered briefly what Hiccup would have thought, but pushed the thought aside. She wasn't marrying Hiccup. She was marrying Ian. She lifted her chin in defiance to herself, and took a deep breath through her nose.

Her chest expanded with her breath, popping one pin and stabbing her with another. She deflated immediately with a half giggle, half whimper of pain. She froze as the seamstress fixed it, while Elinor chuckled behind her hand.

'I'm proud of you, Meridaâ€|' her mother said, and the princess gave her a small smile. Just three days left, and she would be married.

The idea of it turned her slightly pale.

****A/N:**

>Yeah, I know you all hate me.

>There's another one coming to make up for this one being so crappy.

****Fun Fact;** Apparently later years of university is both hard and time consuming. I'm on my break though so I'm trying. ******

****I will not abandon this fic. I've put blood, sweat and tears into it. ****

>And I will finish it.

>Love Knut xx

End
file.